

JEEVADHARA

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MODELS OF CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

SYNOPTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH

John Kurichianil

JOHANNINE THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

Antony Edanad

PAULINE ECCLESIOLOGY

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CHURCH ACCORDING TO THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A. Aloysius Xavier

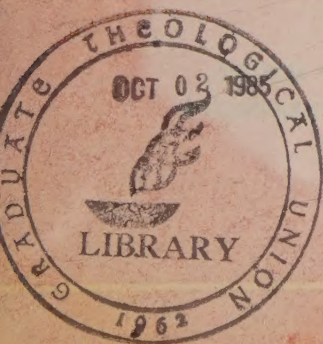
ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE PASTORAL LETTERS

R. J. Raja

THE KINGDOM OF GOD:

AN ANALYTICAL AND SYNTHETIC STUDY

Kallikuzhuppil



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JEEVADHARA

The Word of God

MODELS OF CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Editorial

Ecclesia semper reformanda - "Church always in need of reform" - an almost heretical statement before Vatican II, but a practical and necessary issue before and after. In fact, Vatican II has very clearly acknowledged this fact. "Although the Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, has never ceased to be in the world a sign of salvation, it knows only too well that during the course of its long history, amongst its members, both clerical and lay, there have not been lacking those who showed themselves unfaithful to the Spirit of God. In the present age, too, it does not escape the Church how great a distance lies between the message she offers and the human failings of those to whom the Gospel is entrusted." (GS, art.43) Hence the Decree on Ecumenism says; "Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth." (UR art 6)

Recognition of the deficiencies of the Church throughout the course of history stands out very clearly. In the Declaration on Religious Freedom, mention is made of the unchristian attitudes, which marked the behaviour of Catholics at different times in history (DH art 12). The common declaration of Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras in 1965 about the excommunications of 1054 ratifies solemnly this confession of the historical deficiencies of the Church. The Church, which includes sinners within its fold, has need of incessant renewal and purification: "Whilst Christ, 'holy, innocent, undefiled' (Hb 7:26) knew nothing of sin (2 Cor 5:21), but came to expiate only the sins of the people (Hb 2:17), the Church embracing sinners in her bosom, is, at the same time holy, always in need of being purified, and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal" (LG art 8).

But this awareness and consequent confession was not anything easy. There was a big block within the

Second Vatican Council which insisted on the holiness of the church, claiming that the historical church of today is also "pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection" (Eph 5:27). Though Pope John XXIII envisaged a renewed church, a church purified from within, it took time for some members of Vatican II to realize it, to acknowledge it and also to articulate it in its documents.

20 years after the Council we are once again trying to understand what the reality of the Church is. During these 20 years many books have been written on the Church, many discussions have been held about the nature of the Church. The three major concepts of the Church as *Mystery*, *People of God*, and *Pilgrim Community* seem to constitute a certain amount of polarisation, especially when they are related to the hierarchical structure of the Church. Consequently the accent moves from one to the other with the result that a healthy theology of the Church is still a desideratum. It is also certain that such a theology is not likely to happen, precisely because here we are dealing with a unique reality which is both divine and human. This ambivalence that is characteristic of the Church will continue to manifest itself time and again through the course of history.

Perhaps it is here that we should go back to the New Testament to see how the reality of the Church is reflected in those authentic writings of the first century of the Christian era. The first impression we get is of a pluralistic and multi-faceted reality as well as a certain amount of growth in the understanding of the Church by the various New Testament writers. In other words, there are several models for the New Testament Church. To identify the Church with anyone of those models would be undervaluing the richness of the other models. We cannot even say that the reality of the Church is the sum total of all these models, because these models are products of the first century and are therefore far removed from our understanding of it. At the same time, they

are *normative* models, in so far as they are found in the inspired Word of God. An analysis of the New Testament models will also reveal the richness of those models which can inspire and influence our contemporary discussions.

The six studies in this issue of *Jeevadhara* are meant to highlight these various approaches to the reality of the Church in the New Testament. John Kurichianil studies the concept of the Church as found in the Synoptic Gospels. He establishes that the mission of the Church according to the Synoptic Gospels is the mission of Jesus himself and consequently the Church can fulfil that mission only the way Christ himself fulfilled it, which is not exactly the way the Church has been down the centuries. Antony Edanad writes on "The Johannine Theology of the Church". The Johannine emphasis is not on the external, visible aspects of the community - a community constituted of the believers of different backgrounds. It is more a *koinonia* - a fellowship of Father-children relationship. It is more a community of love. The Word and the Spirit are the dynamic principles of Christian community.

Joseph Pa'thrapankal writes on "Pauline Theology of the Church". He explains how Paul started with the one Church of Jerusalem from which he came to the wider understanding of the many churches. For Paul the reality of the Church is primarily the community and this he explains through many images. The final stage of Pauline reflection on the Church is reached in the Letters to the Colossians and Ephesians where Paul conceives the Church as a cosmic reality transcending the historical manifestations of it in space and time. Aloysius Xavier has his study on the theology of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles. He presents this as a living Church with living issues than as a structured hierarchical Church. The Church of the Acts is patterned on Christ and his living activity in Palestine. John Kallikuzhuppil in his comparative and synthetic study on "The Church and the Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels" tries to examine the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom of God. While some

seem to identify the two, others are tending to oppose the one to the other. In what sense are they related - as sign? as servant? as partial manifestation? The author is of the view that the concept of the covenant may throw some light on this interrelationship.

The study of R. J. Raja on the "Church in Transition: Ecclesiology of the Pastoral Letters" is complementary to the study of Paul. This separate study on Pastoral Letters was made for two reasons: The ecclesiology of the Pastoral Letters is substantially different from that of the Pauline Letters as such. Secondly, the delicate question of the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Letters might be avoided. The present study brings into perspective a Church in transition. Against the prevailing opinion of scholars, the author establishes that the Pastorals do not champion a church of law and order. The images and structures used in the Pastorals are quite fluid and flexible, typical of a time of transition and change. In the Pastorals we see a Church growing up and growing out, a dynamic church, a typical model for the "Post-Vatican Church".

It is hoped, these will highlight the various aspects and dimensions of the Church which together constitute the reality of the Church. They are models which could guide and inspire us in our own study and reflection of the Church today. As the Church is always the storm-centre of all theological reflections in the past and in the present, it is necessary that time and again we go back to the original models and derive our inspiration from them. It is very easy to divinize the Church; it is also very easy to see it as a mere human institution. The task of the Church, of both her leaders and theologians, is to combine the two and to strike a balance, see the inner harmony of these two aspects and make the Church grow in each historical and cultural context.

The Church and the Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels

A Comparative and Synthetic study

Introduction

This study is primarily concerned with the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom of God in the Synoptic gospels. Here one faces several problems — whether the concept of the church originated with Jesus or whether it was a later development. Other questions are derived from this one — whether the church is to be identified with the kingdom of God, whether the kingdom of God includes the church, whether the church is considered a custodian of the kingdom, or whether it witnesses the kingdom. To discuss these issues it will be necessary to explain briefly the terms: church and kingdom of God.

1. Church (Ekklesia)

The term *ekklēsia* (church) is found only in Matthew among the Gospels, who even used it rarely (16:18ff; 18:17ff). It occurs often in other NT writings¹. Both in profane and biblical Greek literature *ekklēsia* means assembly². OT used this term also in a religious context where it bears a theological sense; here it is specified as *ekklēsia Kyriou* (the assembly of the Lord) (Dt 23:1ff; Jdg 20:2; 2 Chr 28:8). Its Hebrew equivalent *qahal Yahweh* signifies 'the people of God' (Dt 23:1ff). This theological sense is transferred to NT people of God. Both Acts and

1. *Ekklesia* occurs often in the Acts of the Apostles, in the letters of Paul and in the book of Apocalypse.

2. Dt 9:10; 1Kgs 18:65; Acts 9:32,39; Liddel and Scott, *The Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 509

Paul used the expression "church of God"³ or churches of Christ (Rom 16:16) to indicate the primitive christian community assembled in the name of the Lord.

Mt used *ekklesia* three times; once it is specified as "my church" which signifies the assembly founded or originated with and belonged to Christ, the Son of the living God (Mt 16:16). So this reality has a unique relation to the person of Christ, which he himself claimed in the phrase "my church". The Matthean context also made use of the metaphor of a building⁴ which in the OT tradition is equally applicable to the idea of the people of God⁵. In the second Matthean context (18:17ff) the aspect of assembly and its belonging to Jesus is underlined (18:20). Hence church is understood as the assembly which was founded and belonged to Christ, the Son of the living God.

In the Matthean context Peter's confession was understood as divine revelation; the corresponding promise of Jesus is also divine since it contains the work of Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus' words to Peter give a clue to the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God. Peter was chosen foundation of Jesus' church; to the same Peter Jesus gives the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The specification "my church" and Jesus' active involvement in its foundation indicate that the new community often mentioned in the NT as the church of God or of Christ was not understood as a mere continuation of the OT people of God but it was entirely a new entity originated with Christ by the very fact that it was redeemed and purified by the atoning death of Jesus (Acts 20:28), in which Jesus ratified the new covenant of the eschatological time (Je 31:31ff; Mt 26:28ff; Lk 22:20ff). Hence the term church used by Mt is a suitable word for the initial community which is characterized as an assembly united together in the name of Jesus, the Messiah and the risen Lord (Acts 4).

3. 1 Co. 1:2; 10:32; 11:32.

4. The words 'to build, foundation, and rock' allude to construction.

5. Je 12:16; 18:9; 24:6; 31:4; 42:10, Am 9:11.

2. Kingdom of God (*Basileia tou Theou*)

The term *hē basileia tou Theou* (the kingdom of God) is a characteristic of the synoptic gospels⁶. Mt prefers the term *he basileia ton ouranon* (30x), [the kingdom of heaven (heavens)].⁷ The first evangelist may not have thought of any essential difference between the two expressions; the term kingdom of heaven may underline certain aspects of the same reality.

The term *basileia* means: the state of being a king, rule or reign. It bears a secondary meaning - the territory or subjects ruled by the king. In its semitic background *basileia* is a dynamic concept⁸ which is reflected in the proclamation of Jesus (Mk 1:15). In the Lord's prayer the term "kingdom of God" is placed parallel with the "will of God". The coming of the kingdom and doing God's will go together. It is God's sovereign activity among men. Jesus' proclamation made an urgent invitation to all men to repent and to believe in the Gospel in order to enter the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God which is a heavenly reality is uniquely related to the person of Jesus. This reality descends from heaven into human history in and through Jesus. He, as the eschatological Messiah, fulfilling the will of God, established the kingdom of God through his passion, death and resurrection (Mk 15:31ff; 14:36). In him God's rule is fully realized since he perfectly responded to God's plan of salvation by self-oblation and thus entered the kingdom of God (Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18). In his ministry Jesus began to establish the kingdom of God by

6. 3:14-31:2; John uses the term kingdom of God twice (3:3,5) and once Jesus employs it referring to his own kingdom (18:36). In all these contexts it signifies a divine reality.

7. Matthew or his tradition used the word 'heaven' as a periphrasis for God. This usage reflects the typical Jewish reverence for divine name. Cf. J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, Vol 1, p. 97.

8. Ps 145:11; 13; 103: 19; the psalmist uses kingdom and power as synonyms (Ps 145:11).

destroying the rule of satan over the world (Mk 3:22ff; Lk 17:20; 11:20), and in him the kingdom becomes a contemporary reality. The term "kingdom of Heaven" which Mt preferred reflects various aspects of this reality such as universal, coming from heaven (divine), its entry into human history (human); it also implies the Lordship of God over the world from its beginning till the end of time⁹.

3. Relationship between the Church and the Kingdom of God

We must note that not all the statements concerning the kingdom can be applied to the church. Still one finds strict similarity between the two in some aspects and clear relationship between the two in certain other points.

a) Kingdom and disciples of Jesus

When Jesus sent his disciples to preach, they proclaimed the kingdom of God and not the church (Mt 10:7); hence the kingdom was not identified with the community of disciples. Jesus never considered his disciples as constituting the kingdom of God. He, however, in his preaching proclaimed the immanence of God's eschatological rule, which was actually present on earth in his own person (Lk 11:20). When Jesus cast out demons by the finger of God, it was the sign that God's kingdom has come upon the people. The power of God is present and is working in and through the person of Jesus.

The disciples are the people in whom the reign of God is manifested. The rule of God does not operate or realize in a vacuum, but in the hearts of men (Lk 17:20). It demands a free personal response; this response is communitarian rather than individual according to the Hebrew thought. This communitarian aspect is present among all those prepared to allow the rule of God to

9. A. Kretzer, *Die Herrschaft der Himmel und die Schen Gottes*, SBM 10, 1971 pp 34ff.

dominate their lives. In this respect the kingdom presupposes some sphere in which God's rule is exercised. The disciples whom Jesus called and appointed (Mk 1:16-02; 3:13ff) form an eschatological community; this community responded to Jesus' invitation to enter into the kingdom of God. The same community received from Jesus the mandate to continue his mission of proclaiming the kingdom; they also received the authority and power of the kingdom from Jesus. The kingdom of God was actually operating in this community and was actually present in them in so far as it actively responded to the call of the eschatological Messiah and the Son of God.

b) Church in the parables of the kingdom

Some parables of the kingdom (Mt 13; Mk 4) denote a community idea reflected in the concept of church. They also reflect its universal aspect. The parable of the mustard seed (Mk 4:30-32) contains some elements of this type: the imagery of the birds of the air signifies a universal aspect (Dn 4:12ff; Ez 31:36); it shows how the nations or peoples of the world embrace the kingdom; it extends to all irrespective of caste or colour. The parable of the drag-net (Mt 13:47ff) shows that the kingdom is to be all embracing in its scope-affecting both the good and the bad; this state cannot be verified in the glorious eschatological kingdom of God. But there is a process of selection at the close of the age (at the time of the harvest) to eliminate the bad from the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven symbolized in the drag-net is very similar to the picture of the church which Jesus founded on Peter; this church includes both good and bad as its members; the metaphor of binding and loosing (16:18ff) and the parables of the lost sheep and the merciless servant, and the norm of correcting the brothers allude to this nature of the church (18:18ff, 21ff).

c) Entering the kingdom of God

The notion of entering the kingdom found in the sayings of Jesus (Mk 9:47; Mt 7:21; Lk 16:16 etc) also suggests a relationship between the kingdom and the church.

The pharisees and the scribes were charged with preventing the people from entering the kingdom (Mt 23:13; Lk 11:53); this saying suggests that a man now has the opportunity to enter a new way of life in which the will of God becomes the norm. The lawyers were charged with taking away the keys of knowledge (Mt 23:13) whereas the keys of the kingdom were entrusted to Peter. What the Jewish leaders failed to do, was entrusted to Peter who is the foundation of the church. Peter received a divine mandate. The metaphor of the keys signifies both authority and protection; it also alludes to the mission of leading the people to the kingdom through preaching and teaching. Moreover, the basic requirement to enter the Kingdom and to belong to the church of Christ is baptism (Mt 28:18ff; Jn 3:1ff). In his presentation of the kingdom Mt speaks of the kingdom of the Father (13:43; 26:29; 6:10,33) and the kingdom of the Son of Man (13:41; 16:28; 20:21). The kingdom of the Son of Man could be identical with the church in several aspects. Here the kingdom of God is historically manifested in the church.

d) Church, a partial manifestation of the Kingdom

Jesus commissioned the disciples to announce the coming of the kingdom of God. The twelve whom Jesus constituted to be with him represent the true Israel who responded to Jesus' invitation to the kingdom Mk 1:14-20). The kingdom which descends from heaven is present in this group who does the will of God the Father and becomes the new family which the eschatological Messiah created (Mk 3:31-35; Mt 12:46-50). The kingdom is present in them who are committed to it.

e) The kingdom of God and the people of the new covenant

In the OT Yahweh ratified his covenant with the assembly of the Lord (Dt 23:2) which is Israel (Dt 31:30). This assembly was considered the bearer of the covenantal promises even for the gentiles. Through his covenant Yahweh chose Israel as his own private property (possessions) (Dt 7:6; 14:2, 26:18); and the people should accept Yahweh

as their only Lord and King. But the people failed to be faithful to Him. So He chose another people in her place (Mt 16:18; 21:43)¹⁰. The fundamental stipulations of the Sinaitic covenant were enumerated in the decalogue (Ex 20:2-17; Dt 5:6-21). The commandment of love which is the fulfilment of Law and the Prophets was given by the Messiah as the fundamental rule of the new covenant (Mt 22:37-40; Mk 12:28-34). One who fulfils this commandment will enter into the kingdom of God (Mk 12:38). One finds here the inner reality and the profound sense of the kingdom and the church because the communion between God and the people and the fraternal communion within the people themselves was fully realized in the fulfilment of this commandment of love; but this communion will be fully attained in the eschatological consummation. This love which should be realized in deeds is both the love of God and that of the neighbours; this bond of love constitutes the communion of the church in its spatio-temporal phase (Mt 18:15-17), and it is the goal of the kingdom in the last days (Mt 25:31-46). The person of Jesus both reveals and realizes the depth of this commandment which is the revelation of the will of God. This love should be shown to the brothers who were going wrong and were making mistakes (Mt 18:18ff; 16:18ff).

f) The church shares the judicial authority
of the glorious King

The metaphor of binding and loosing reveals the nature of the authority which Christ conferred on Peter, the foundation of his assembly. This figure shows that the church possessed strength and power received from the present reign of Christ. Christ conferred on Peter the authority to open and give access to the kingdom to those who are called to salvation and gathered in the church. Here Peter together with the twelve (Mt 18:18ff) has to

10. There is an implicit relationship between the covenant context of Deuteronomy and that of Matthew, Cf. W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israel* pp. 48f.

lead the people of God into the kingdom of resurrection. The divine authority to forgive sins is conferred on Peter and on the church in order to fulfil this mission. The twelve will share in the judicial act of the glorious Son of Man in the last days of the church (Mt 19:28ff).

The glorious Christ exercises his power through his church (Mt 28:20); he executes it by sending his disciples to all nations in order to call them to discipleship. All nations were invited to accept his rule visibly by becoming his disciples and receiving baptism in the name of the triune God. The disciples also received the mission of preserving them through their instruction of everything their Lord commanded (Mt 28:19f). Here the church becomes the place where after Lord's departure all must gather who are called to the kingdom of God. Jesus' promise to Peter also implies that the church with its saving powers is indestructible: it will endure even to the end of this aeon until the coming of the kingdom in glory; thus the church will share in the power of resurrection which characterizes the kingdom of God (Lk 20:36ff)¹¹.

g) The kingdom of God and the liturgical assembly

The basic orientation of the church towards the kingdom of God is well reflected in the central act of the celebration of the Eucharist. In this context the words of Jesus at the concluding part of the Passover meal is particularly striking: "Amen I say to you that from now on I shall drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it (with you) new in the kingdom of God" (Mk 14:25//). This saying which is found in Luke also, reveals the eschatological dimension and the deeper relationship between Jesus and his disciples implied in this event. In his blood Jesus ratified the new covenant (Jer 31:31ff) which is the eschatological order of salvation for the whole mankind. Through his self-oblation Jesus makes other men share in the kingdom of God. The

11. O. Cullmann, *Petrus-Junger-Apostel - Martyrer* 1962, p. 235

church which is the eschatological people of God belongs to this new covenant (Lk 22:20).

In the celebration of the Eucharist the church shares in the table fellowship with Jesus; and it is a ritual anticipation and an existential enactment of the table-fellowship with the glorified Christ in the kingdom (Lk 22:30). The church experiences the blessings of God's definitive covenant of salvation of the last days in the liturgical act. The church which is the redeemed society, assembled in the name of Jesus, awaits the return of Christ for its final glorification.

Conclusion

The eschatological and divine reality of the kingdom of God was actually present in the person of Jesus and through him this presence is realized in the church in its spatio-temporal phase. But the church which is the community redeemed by Christ through his self-oblation became the heir of the promises of the new covenant, namely, the blessings of the eschatological kingdom. The church will also find its fulfilment in the kingdom of God. The church of God in the NT is reserved for the eschatological interim period between the coming of Christ and his glorious return. During this period the church follows Christ in his way of the cross to glory. The author of Hebrews characterized this period as a pilgrimage. The pilgrim people of God will reach its destination when it enters into the 'Sabbath rest' which is the glorious kingdom of God. It is the new Jerusalem (Heb 12:23; Apoc 22:35), where the church, the worshipping community, attains perfect experience of the kingdom of God. Here the earthly church is glorified and merged into the heavenly community (Heb 12:22ff). Again the eschatological event of the final glorification of the church is described by the metaphor of marriage of the church to her heavenly bridegroom (Apoc 19:7ff; 21:2). The church is the chaste virgin who is longing for celebrating a marriage with Christ at the Parousia¹².

12. R. Schnackenburg, *The Church in the New Testament*, 1974, p. 194

Church according to the Acts of the Apostles

"Luke elaborates no doctrine of the Church; only once (Acts 9:13) does the word *ecclesia* have a meaning beyond 'local congregation' and it then simply covers the Church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria."¹

The Acts of the Apostles cannot be taken as a treatise on ecclesiology but at the same time it tells how the first believers in Christ formed the Church. The Church made up of the first believers as depicted in the *Acts of the Apostles* has been studied and much has been written under various aspects. We can study its nature, mission and extension; the organisation of the church by the persons who were pioneers of its growth such as Peter, Stephen and Paul; the various ministers of the Church beginning with the apostles, witnesses, the seven deacons, prophets and elders, and disciples of the church. We can look at the cult of the first community of the believers, namely, Baptism and the breaking of the bread or the ethics of the community such as its perseverance, the poverty, sharing of its goods, the fellowship that prevailed among its members and the prayer life of the community².

The Acts of the Apostles is the second volume of Luke. The first is the Gospel. The close connection between the one and the other must be taken into consideration for any study on the Acts of the Apostles. The very title given to the second volume of Luke deserves attention.

1. E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Oxford, 1971, p. 93.

2. F. Bovon: *Luc le Theologien, vingt-cinq ans des recherches* (1950-75). Delachaux & Niestlès, Paris, 1978, pp. 309-427.

"The second book addressed to Theophilus continues Luke's story about the origin and growth of Christianity under the guidance of the Spirit, who directed the authenticated witnesses to testify what Jesus had done and taught (Acts 1:1). Luke himself told how Jesus fashioned such witnesses during his ministry. The Acts now carries the historical account forward, spelling out in detail and above all through the activity of the two prime witnesses, Peter and Paul"³. The Acts of the Apostles speaks about the deeds and acts of the apostles who shaped the first community at the beginning of Christianity. They are the vehicles of the Word of God, they are the witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Christ. But in this process of speaking in the Acts of the Apostles, Luke finds the resemblance, similarity, parallels between the words and deeds of Christ and those of the apostles.

"The characteristic of Luke-Acts which has come to be recognised as a fact Luke's artistry has the tendency to balance some features of his work with another which corresponds or is analogous to it in some way.....As far as we know, only Luke-Acts in early christianity reflects the conviction that both the story of Jesus and the story of the apostolic Church are incomplete one without the other but complements. Hence any attempt at understanding the architecture of the Lucan writings must treat the Gospel-Acts pattern as basic. For this reason, the remarkable correspondence both in content and sequence between the events and persons found in Luke and Acts must be regarded as the primary architechtonic pattern in Luke-Acts."⁴ So the study of parallels of events and persons between Luke-Acts will help us to find the nature of the church in the Acts. We shall restrict our study only to the parallels and that too to four events, namely, reception of the Holy Spirit, preaching, miracles and persecutions and death.

3: *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, TDI II Vol. p. 166

4. C. H. Talbert: *Literary patterns, Theological themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts*, Scholars Press, Montana, 1974. p. 15.

1. The Holy Spirit

The role of the Holy Spirit is great in the Gospel of Luke. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:41). Holy Spirit was with Zachariah (Lk 2-25-27). Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The angel said to Mary "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most Holy will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the son of God." (Lk 1:35)

Jesus' public ministry starts with his baptism at which he receives the Holy Spirit while praying (Lk 3:21-22). After the forty days' stay in the desert and the temptation Jesus returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee (Lk 4:14). Jesus begins his first sermon with the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Lk 4:18). As in the Gospel, in the Acts also the scene begins with the descent of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, before the ascension, says to the apostles, "...before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). While they were all together there appeared to them tongues of fire, resting on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit... (Acts 2:1-4). In his first speech, Peter quotes the prophecy of Joel, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17).

Thus we see the role of the Holy Spirit emphasized both in the life of Jesus and that of the apostles. The Holy Spirit plays an important role in three great periods: In the Old testament time where Holy Spirit was promised, the life of Jesus where Spirit comes but concentrated on Jesus and the time of the Church where the Spirit is poured out upon the Church⁵.

5. F. Bovon: *Op. cit* p. 217. On page 221 Foot-note no. 2, we read; "It is a gospel of the work of the Spirit, whose continuous activity before the birth of the Saviour, in him, and then, as a unifying theme through these Lucan summaries. In the O. T. dispensation God revealed his purpose through the prophetic spirit, during the ministry of Jesus the Spirit works in him as the power in which the kingdom of

2. The Parallel of preaching

The preaching takes an important place in the Acts of the Apostles as in the Gospel. The speeches in the Acts are an extensive element in its composition - amounting roughly one fifth of the whole volume - and one of its most striking feature⁶. Jesus emphasizes that he has come to preach. "I must preach the good news of the kingdom to the other cities also...I was sent for this purpose...and he was preaching in the synagogue of Juda." (Lk 4:43-44) The idea echoes in the words of the apostles at the time of the appointment of the seven. "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve the table. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4).

The content of the preaching of the apostles is called in the Acts as 'Word of God' (4:29, 31). It is the same word used for the message of Jesus (Lk 5:1; 8:11; 11:28). "Thus a common designation in primitive Christianity for the Gospel message is used to indicate the continuity between the message of Jesus and that of his disciples"⁷.

The continuity with the Gospel is further explained in the Acts through the use of the word: 'Proclaim the news' in order to describe the activity of the apostles⁸. E. Haenchen observes: "It is this word of God which fills the time after Pentecost; this word is further more the message concerning Jesus, belief in whom brings forgiveness of sins and deliverance in the judgement. Here is then the clamp which fastens the two eras together and

God is already operative among men; and after his death and exaltation the same power, as the spirit poured out by the Lord Christ, is the guide and driving force of the apostolic mission to evangelize the whole world."

6. H. J. Cadbury: *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol. V p. 402

7. I. H. Marshall: *Luke, Historian and Theologian*, The Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1979. p. 160

8. Lk 4:43; 7:22; 8:1; Acts 5:42; 8:4, 12.

justifies, indeed demands the continuation of the first book (depicting the life of Jesus as a time of salvation) to a second one; for the salvation which has appeared must be preached to all peoples, and the very portrayal of this mission will serve the awakening belief, and hence the attainment of salvation."⁹

3. Miracles

Miracles form a major part of the Gospels. Luke, besides narrating the miracles wrought by the Lord, gives a short summary of the miracles in Lk 4:40-41; 6:18-19. In the Acts also Luke gives a summary of the miracles by the apostles (Acts 5:12-16; 6:18; 19:11-12).

Luke takes pains to narrate the miracles performed by Peter in the same way as he narrated the miracles of Jesus. There is much resemblance between Peter raising up Tabitha at Lydda (Acts 9:36-43) and Jesus' raising up Jairus's daughter (Lk 8:41-55). (There is also resemblance between the miracles of Jesus and those of Paul.)

Lk 8:41. And there came a man named Jairus who was the ruler of the synagogue; and falling at his feet he besought him to come to his house (42). He had only a daughter ... and she was dying	Acts 9:36. Now there was a disciple named Tabitha...she was full of good words and acts of charity...she fell sick and died...sent two men to him (Peter) entreating him, "Please come to us without delay".
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52. All were weeping and and bewailing her	39. All widows stood beside him weeping
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53. He permitted no one to enter."	40. Peter put them all outside.
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54. He called saying, "Child, arise".	40. He said, "Tabitha, arise".
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55. Her spirit returned and she got up at once.	40. She opened her...eyes and sat up.
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9. E. Haenchen; *The Acts of the Apostles*, Oxford, 1971. p. 98

But the apostles perform the miracles in the Acts of the Apostles in the name of Jesus. When Peter cures the lame man he says, "...in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (Acts 3:6). Again talking to the people after the miracle Peter says, "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?... And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong..." (Acts 3:6, 12, 16)

Another striking factor is that Luke does not use the word 'signs and wonders' in his Gospel for the miracles wrought by Jesus. He uses this phrase 'signs and wonders' in the Acts of the Apostles either for the miracles performed by the apostles (Acts 2:43; 5:12; 6:8) or for the miracles wrought by Jesus and referred to by the apostles in their discourses (Acts 2:22). "In LXX the formula 'signs and wonders' based on the Deuteronomic model, seems to have been reserved for God's wonders in the days of Moses. Luke used this phrase to spotlight on the apostles that it is Jesus' hand that is at work in them. In the last resort it is God himself who does the work (Acts 15:12). The apostolic 'signs and wonders' seem to be particularly important, for in them is to be found an essential and indispensable part of the divine authentication of the apostles."¹⁰

4. Persecution

Christ announced the passion and death he has to undergo and died on the cross. Even after the resurrection, he recalled to the disciples on their way to Emmaus, "Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Lk 24:46). The apostles follow their master. In the case of Paul careful examination reveals seven references to the journey to Jerusalem in both the passion journey of Jesus in the third gospel and that of Paul in Acts.

10. Fuchs: art. "Lemeion" in *TDNT* ed. by Kittel, Grand Rapids M. Chigan, 1971, Vol. VII, p.221, p. 224

Lk 9:51, 53, He set his face to go to Jerusalem	Acts 19:21 Paul resolved to go to Jerusalem
13:22. He was journeying towards Jerusalem	20:22. I am going to Jerusalem
13:33. I must go on my way, for a prophet cannot perish away from Jerusalem	21:4. They told Paul not to go to Jerusalem
17:11. On the way to Jerusalem he was passing between Samaria and Galilee	21:11-12 Agabus told Paul that Jews at Jerusalem would bind him
18:31 We are going upto Jerusalem	21:13. Paul replied that he was ready to die at Jerusalem
19:11 He was near to Jerusalem	21: 15. We made ready to go to Jerusalem
19:23. He went on ahead, going upto Jerusalem	21:17. When they had come to Jerusalem. ¹¹

There is also a striking "Parallelism between the death of Jesus and that of Stephen. Both are tried before the council (Lk 22:66-67; Acts 6:12-15). Both die a martyr's death. Two utterances of Jesus are echoed in the words of Stephen. Acts 7:59, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" echoes Luke 24:46, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit". Acts 7:60, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them", echoes Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"¹².

Thus we see there is close resemblance between the acts of Jesus as narrated in Luke's Gospel and that of the apostles in the Acts. Is this close resemblance between Jesus and the apostles due to the tradition Luke received or is it due to his redaction of the Acts. It will be beyond the scope of this article to enter into the redaction criticism of the Acts of the Apostles. Following the opinion of Talbert, we feel that the resemblance or the architectonic pattern is due to the editorial activity of Luke

11. C. H. Talbert: *Op, cit.* p. 17

12. C. H. Talbert; *Op, cit.* p. 96 & 97

"From the preceding examination of the Third Evangelist's use of his source in the Gospel of Luke it appears that where modifications were necessary to achieve a loose correspondence of content and sequence between persons and events in the third Gospel and those of the Acts, they were made without hesitation. The conclusion seems irresistible. This architectonic pattern which the Gospel and the Acts correspond in content and in sequence at many points is due to deliberate editorial activity by the author of Luke-Acts."¹³

Why does Luke deliberately try to achieve a correspondence between the Gospel and the Acts?

C. H. Talbert proposes a solution for this phenomenon. He says that it can be accounted for by the motif of 'Imitatio magistri'. It is due to the Lucan appropriation of the popular image of the philosopher in the Hellenistic world at the beginning of the Christian era¹⁴. We find in Luke-Acts an architectural pattern of correspondence between the career of Jesus and the life of the apostolic church. We find that the evangelist definitely wanted to portray the deeds and teachings of Jesus as a pattern for acts and instructions of the apostolic church. It is therefore nearly impossible to avoid the conclusion that these correspondences between Jesus and the church serve the same 'Imitatio magistri' motif. In terms of the philosophic image, Jesus is the master who is the source of christian way of life. The apostolic church is composed of his pupils who have fully learned his way inasmuch as their subordination to him as a teacher results in a unity of life and doctrine. The tradition is passed on to the posterity through the life and teaching of the apostolic church¹⁵.

W. C. Van Unnik emphasizes more on the idea of salvation as the reason for the similarity between the third Gospel and the Acts. "According to Van Unnik the purpose

13. C. H. *Op. cit.* p. 23

14. C. H. Talbert: *Op. cit.* p. 89

15. C. H. Talbert: *Op. cit.* p. 99

of the Gospel is to show forth the saving activity of Jesus, and the Acts describes how the Church continued to proclaim and confirm this salvation. Thus the purpose of the Acts is to build a solid bridge between the facts recorded in the Gospel and the people who never saw Jesus incarnate so that they might realize that the salvation was for them and come to embrace."¹⁶

It is true that, as Talbert says, the Church is imitating its master and as Van Unnik considers the church stands as authenticity of salvation. But in this regard Conzelmann's description of the Lucan periodization of history retains its convincing power in the scholarly world¹⁷. The ecclesiology of Conzelmann divides the salvation history into three stages. The beginning is marked, according to Conzelmann, by creation and the corresponding other extreme is parousia. Between these two limits history runs its course in three phases:

- i The period of Israel, of the laws and prophets,
- ii The period of Jesus, which gives a foretaste of future salvation, and
- iii The period between the coming of Jesus and his parousia, the period of the church and of the Spirit. This is the last stage.

According to Conzelmann there is a continuity linking the three periods and the essence of the one is carried through into the next¹⁸.

Thus according to Luke, the Church is not merely an imitation of Christ or only an authentic witness of Christ. It is a continuity, a continuity in the history of salvation. The Church is the sign of something. Looking back, it stands as the sign of the kingdom of God that has

16. I. H. Marshall: *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, the Paternoster Press Exter, 1979, p. 93

17. C. H. Talbert: *Op. cit.* p. 104

18. H. Conzelmann; *The Theology of Saint Luke*, Faber and Faber, London, 1960, pp. 149-50

come through Jesus, and looking forward it is the sign of the end of the world, its eschatological period and parousia.

The church bears witness to Christ and imitates its master to show that the kingdom of God has come in him and the final period of the history of salvation has dawned. In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke presents the Church as the one continuing the work of Jesus and a new phase of the period has begun.

So far, we have seen the similarities between the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. But there is also a difference between the time of Jesus and the time of the Church.

The time of the Gospel is the time of Jesus. He was with the Apostles, forming them as witnesses, preaching and performing miracles. But in the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus is no more, the time of the early church is the time of the Holy Spirit. He is the force and power to guide them. "The apostles heal (acts 3:6,16; 4:10,30; 19:13) and preach (4:12,17; 5:28,40) in the name of Jesus. They suffer for the sake of his name (5:41; 9:16; 21:13). Yes, exalted Christ is present in the community in virtue of his name. This name has the power to save (Acts 12:21). But it is the Holy Spirit that fills the community with courage (4:31) and comfort (9:31), thus equipping it for its divine mission in the world (19:6; 20:28)¹⁹.

Another difference between the two periods is that the time of Jesus was victorious. He had the full control over the devil. The devil was away from him from the time of temptation until the time of the passion. That is why Luke says, "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time" (Lk 4:13). Again the Satan enters at the time of the passion. The trials and difficulties continue in the Acts.

19. . Flender H. St. Luke, *Theologian of Redemptive History*, S.P.C.K. London, 1967. p. 139

We see how the apostles Peter and John were arrested (Acts 4:3), the persecution of Stephen followed by a great persecution that arose against the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). The Acts of the Apostles ends with Paul being taken as captive to Rome. Thus the church undergoes trials and difficulties.

The Acts tells us about the mission of the church. It is true that the apostles were asked to be witnesses: "you shall receive the power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

But the Holy Spirit was not the prerogative of the apostles only. It was given both to the Gentiles and the Jews. "Every believer, therefore, possesses the spirit... This gift of the spirit to every believer has the same effect as in the case of the apostles. Its purpose is to constitute a church composed of missionaries. This is substantiated by Acts 4:31, which shows that the task of speaking the word of the Lord was not confined to the apostles. The gift of the Holy Spirit was for equipping the church for mission and consequently Luke regarded the essence of being a christian as the activity of mission. Acts 8:4-6 and 11:19-21 show that people other than the apostles and appointed missionaries preaching the Gospel." E. Schweitzer observes, "a Church which does not engage in mission is not a church filled by the spirit and hence not a church living in the new era"²⁰.

To conclude, there is a continuity between the time of Jesus and the time of the Church. It is the continuity of the same history but of different periods. There is also difference between the time of Jesus and that of the Church. The time of the Church is the time of the Spirit who is abiding in the Church to encourage it, comfort it and thus equip it for its divine mission in the world.

20. I. H. Marshall: *Op. cit.* p. 200

The Church in Transition-

Ecclesiology of the Pastoral Letters

As the *transition* from the pre-Vatican II Church to the post-Vatican II Church has had its traumatic effects on millions of Catholics, the passage from the apostolic to the post-apostolic age had left its grim effects on the Pastorals, written around A. D. 110, when the official persecution under Domitian (A. D. 96) was making its sporadic repercussions in Asia Minor.

Typical to the age of transition, the Pastorals betray a struggle which is revealed in certain weaknesses and mistakes, joys and sorrows, questionings and breast-beatings, the obvious consequences of an assessment of the past and a probing into the future, a sign of *growing up* and *growing out*. It is precisely this state of affairs that makes the teaching of the Pastorals flexible, so that the "deposit of faith"¹ (1 Tim 6, 20; 2 Tim 1, 12-14) or "sound teaching"² (1 Tim 1, 10; 2 Tim 4, 3; Tit 1, 9; 2, 1) is not viewed as static but *dynamic*, in so far as applications to new situations reveal ever new facets of the only "deposit of faith" and "sound doctrine".³

1. The term *paratheke* (lit. 'to place beside') means the Gospel enshrined in the body of doctrine constituting the teaching of faith, as handed on from tradition. It appears only in the Pastorals, thrice (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12-14). cf. Maurer, C., *paratithemi*, TDNT; VIII, 163-164

2. While the term *didaskalia* meaning, teaching or doctrine occurs in the Pastorals 15 times, as opposed to only 6 times in the rest of the N. T., its qualified use as *didaskalia hygiainousa* - "sound teaching", is found 4 times, only in the Pastorals. It means "the historical revelation of God as attested by Scripture and fulfilled in Jesus" cf. Rengstorf, K. H., *didaskalia*, TDNT II, 161-163

3. Karris, R. J. *The Pastoral Epistles* (Dublin 1979) X-XVII.

With regard to the "church" and church-organization one cannot fail to see the effects of the transition leaving its indelible stamp in the Pastorals. For us, living still the after-effects of Vat. II, a transition stage, the Pastorals have much to tell with regard to necessary adaptations and changes in church-structures, while at the same time remaining faithful to "the word of God which is living and active" (Heb 4:12). We shall start our exposition with the existing structures themselves as presented in the Pastorals.

Office of "Deaconesses" and "Order of Widows"

It is, to say the least, disgusting to treat women as a *problem* in the Church⁴. Did women hold positions of offices in the early Church? Were they "formally enrolled" as such?⁵

The term *deaconess* is never used in the N. T. But after mentioning the *deacons* (in 1 Tim 3:8), the author adds the phrase, "the women likewise..." (3:11). The problem has been posed if these women were "wives of the deacons" or women belonging to a class as the deacons (namely *deaconesses*) or simply women in general!⁶. The arguments in favour of "deaconesses" cannot be simply by-passed. The word *likewise* in 3:11

4. Cf. Raja, R. J., "Prophets for the Third World" in *Vidyajyoti* Oct. 1984 pp 434-437; id. "Pauline Women: a Probe into women's ministry" in *Ministries in the Church in India* (New Delhi 1976) 213-220.

5. In 1 Tim 5,9 the term used with regard to the widows is *Katagoin* which means to be inscribed in a catalogue is in the enrolment of soldiers. Could it be taken as equivalent to joining in a religious congregation today?

6. Spicq, P. C., *Les Epîtres Pastorales* (Paris 1947) 100-101 mentions authors beginning with the Fathers up to our own time holding each of the 3 positions!; Brox, N., *Die pastoralbriefe* (Regensburg 1965) 154, prefers to interpret them as *deaconesses*. Dornier, p., *Les Epîtres Pastorales* (Paris 1965) 64-65; Raja, "Pauline Women", 213-215, 215 where the author defends the possibility of the existence of a Special class of women - the *deaconesses*.

would imply that the author is thinking of a new class similar to that of the deacons. Besides, negatively, the question may legitimately be raised, that if the author is here talking about the duties of the wives of the deacons, how about, when he is writing about the "bishops" in 3:1-7, he does not say anything about their wives though he mentions explicitly that the "bishop" must be "the husband of one wife" (3:2)? Thirdly, the qualities attributed to this group of women seem analogous to those of the office of a bishop or of the deacons⁷. Further, the context of Rom 16:1 leads us to think of Phoebe a woman as a "deaconess", although the masculine term (deacon) is used⁸. Hence an *order of deaconesses* stands a very high probability in the Pastorals.

A similar point may be raised with regard to the *widows* mentioned 7 times in 1 Tim 5:3-16. Were they the so-called social outcasts deserving one's pity and commiseration only (cf. Dt. 27:19; Ez 22:7; Acts 6:1-6), or did they belong to an *order* similar to that of the "deaconesses"? The term *katalegein* (5:9) meaning, "to be inscribed or enrolled" would suggest the idea that some official recognition was given to this group. The demands made on them (5:3-8) as on the "deaconesses" (3:11-13) and the fact that they are known as *the widows* (Acts 9:39-41) would make us think of an *order of women* having a place in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the time⁹.

The situation of the Church in transition does not lead us to affirm apodictically what is said of the *order*

7. Guthrie, D., *The Pastoral Epistles* (Leicester 1983) 85; Spicq, *op. cit.* 101; Karris, *op. cit.* 75; Brox, *op. cit.* 154

8. Cf. Karris, *op. cit.* 75, where he uses the term "deaconess" both in Rom 16,1 and 1 Tim 3:11; see also RSV - "deaconess" TOB "diaconesse"; *La Sacra Bibbia* (Salani) "diaconessa" in Rom 16,1. The use of "diakon" in Rom 16,1 could be understood as a "woman deacon".

9. Spicq, *op. cit.* 166; Karris, *op. cit.* 102; Brox, *op. cit.* 190-191; Guthrie *op. cit.* 102

of *deaconesses*" and the *order of widows*: but at the same time it does not negate a strong possibility of their existence, a challenge indeed for the Post-Vatican Church in enrolling women as office-holders within the patriarchal "household of God"! For, are we not as much "in transition" as the Church of the Pastorals was?

It is not very clear from the texts as to what are the specific functions of these women. We may imagine that they were engaged in *feminine* ministrations, as the deacons were with men, in doing charitable works, preparing the woman catechumens for baptism, playing the hostess, and in general what we may call *the ministry in caring*¹⁰.

"Elders" and "Bishop"

The Church in transition once again presents its flexibility with regard to the office of *bishop* ("episkopos") and the "*elders*" ("presbyteroi")¹¹. Surely the term *episkopos* should not be understood in terms of later monarchical episcopate, since there is no suggestion in the Pastorals that he was in sole charge of any community nor that each community was restricted to one bishop¹².

That the terms *presbyteroi* and *episkopos* are used interchangeably in the Pastorals (esp. in Tit 1,5-6), is a fact that needs to be considered carefully. Already

10. Raja, "Prophets for the Third World" 434-437; id. "Pauline Women" 216-220

11. The term *episkopos* literally means an overseer (*epi-skopos*), while the term *presbyteros* (in Tim 5,1-2 the terms *presbyteros* and *presbyterai* are not used with reference to "men-priests" and "women priests", but simply to denote an older man with respect to age and older woman in the same sense, since the latter is put in opposition to ("younger woman") means an elder and not a priest in our sense. Gealy, F. D; Noyes, M. P., *The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus* (Ny 1955) 345-346 opine that the 2 names were given for geographical reasons - *episkopos* in Asia; *presbyteros* in Macedonia. Cf. Brox, *op. cit.* 147-152

12. Guthrie, *op. cit.* 25-26.

in Acts 20 such an exchange of terms is revealed. In 20:17 Paul is said to have assembled "the elders of the church" (*presbyteroi*) and addressed them as "guardians" (*episkopoi*) appointed by the Holy Spirit (cf. 20:28).

This mixing up of names is perceived once again clearly in *Tit 1:5-7* where in verses 5-6 the author uses the term *presbyteroi* to denote a body of men in charge of various christian communities; and while addressing them, he shifts his terminology to *ho episkopos* ("a bishop" in the singular in verse 7). Does this transition denote that the former gives place to the latter or both are only synonyms? We may not be wrong in affirming that as part of a "church" in transition, the mixing up of traditions about *elders* and a *bishop* is quite natural, and one is used for the other, since the main concern of the author seems to be that a "church" in transition should have *qualified leaders*, be they *elders* or *bishop*.

In *1 Tim 3:1-13* the same type of transition is perceived between the terms *episkopos* and *diakonoi*. After describing the qualities needed in a "bishop" (3:1-7), by-passing the "elders" the author delineates the characteristics of the "deacons" (3:8-13). But in *1 Tim 5:17-19*, only the term "presbyteroi" is used without any mention made either of "episkopos" or of "diakonoi"!

All the 3 texts mentioned above do not throw much light on the situation. But the use of the term "episkopos", only in the singular in the Pastorals (*1 Tim 3:2*; *Tit 1:7*) and its use as "episkopoi" in the plural in the Acts (20:28) and the use of the definite article in both cases (cf. "ho episkopos") would suggest the idea that we are in a situation where there were many "elders", but only "one bishop"! This seems further confirmed by the fact that Titus is given the charge of "appointing elders" (*Tit 1:5*) in every town in Crete; and Timothy had been confirmed in his ministry by the laying on of hands

by the "college of elders" (cf. the word *presbyterion* meaning "presbyterium" is used in 1 Tim 4: 14)¹³.

One should not overlook an important fact that Paul was still the one *responsible* for the communities of Ephesus (Acts 20) and Crete (Tit 1), though from afar; and it was he who directed and governed them through his collaborators Titus and Timothy. It may not look strange then that once Paul and his collaborators would be no more, one of the "elders", a legitimate heir to the apostles or of Titus or Timothy, and at the same time the joint-choice of the *presbyterium* (1 Tim 4: 14) may have been nominated *episkopos*. This may be the origin of the present episcopate. The name has remained the same, but the modalities of appointing, functioning etc. have changed regrettably. If our analysis is on the right track then whatever is said of as requirements for *episkopos* and *presbyteroi* (in 1 Tim 3:2-7; 5: 17-22; Tit 1: 5-9) would be applicable also to present-day episcopate transcending, however, the cultural idiosyncrasies¹⁴.

The ambiguous, inexact and distressingly meagre accounts only highlight the *unbroken chain* of apostolic succession (from Paul to Timothy-Titus, to "episkopos" / "presbyteroi") through an ordained ministry (1 Tim 4:14) leaving much in confusion; indeed a typical trait of a transition "church"! The need for structure is recognized, but room is given for *different styles* of church-government.

What is demanded, however, is that the Gospel is faithfully preached (1 Tim 5:17; 4:13 Tit 1:9), which is elaborated in three directions - *preaching, liturgy and personal conduct and dealings* with various categories of people.

3. The term *presbyterion* is used only thrice in N. T., in Lk 22:66; Acts 22: 5 and 1 Tim 4:14. In the Lukan writings the term stands in apposition to the two constituent groups that compose the sanhedrin and hence the Sanhedrin itself. Bornkamm, G., *presbyteros* TDNT, VI 66-366; Beyer, H.W., *episkopos* TDNT II 615-617

14. Cipriani, S., *Lettere Pastorali* (Roma 1977) 30-32.

The "bishop" first and foremost is a *teacher*. It is incumbent on him to hold on to "the sure word" (Tit 1:9), to guard "the deposit of faith" (1 Tim 6:20-21), to preach "the sound doctrine" (Tit 1: 9; 2: 1), in sum, "to preach the word" (2 Tim 4:2) which is *the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, which Paul has made his own ("my own") Gospel (2 Tim 2:8-9), "the word of truth" (2:15). That this should be the *primary duty* of the "bishop" is expressed in the terms: "be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching" (4:2). This is exactly what Paul himself had taught as "inspired by God" (3:14-15) and for which he had suffered (1:12-13).

To be taken note of is the fact that this teaching of the Good News has to be accompanied by a certain *firmness* in correcting counterfeit or heterodox teachers, (Tit 1: 11; 1 Tim 1:3-5) coupling it however with the *love (agape)* of a concerned pastor (1:5)¹⁵.

The "bishops" responsibility also devolves around *public worship*, the matter and the manner of which should be part of his concern for the flock. Also with regard to the public reading of scripture (what we today call the "Liturgy of the Word") it becomes the "bishop's" duty to lay down proper norms (1 Tim 4:13). Of course all these have to be understood in the context of heterodox teaching. Besides, the motive that should govern all these directions is "a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way" (1 Tim 2:1-2)¹⁶.

17. The false teachers referred to in 1 Tim 1, 3ff are the Gnostics of the 2nd c. or people who belonged to a Jewish sect interested in the speculative aspects (*mythos*) of Judaism. In Tit 1: 11 however these are men belonging to the circumcision party. The warnings given here seem apt to our own times, against the quest for novelties and vain speculations in Christian teaching. Cf. Guthrie, *op. cit.* 57-58.

16. What is said here in the context of praying "for kings and all who are in high position" is true of all situations. A quiet and tranquil life when it is guaranteed by the State becomes the basis for the fullest expression of christian dignity of demeanour and the practice of religious devotion and duties.

Finally, a "bishop" has to be a *man of character and social virtues*. Both in personal conduct and in dealing with his flock - old and young, men and women, slaves and widows (cf. 1 Tim 5:1-16; Tit 2: 1-10; 3:1-2), his behaviour must be exemplary and above board. Hence *impartiality* is strongly demanded of him in terms of a solemn adjuration. "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect *angels* I charge you to keep these rules without favour, doing nothing from partiality" (1 Tim 5:21; cf 2 Tim 4: 1).

That the "bishop" should be *the model for his flock* is a persistent teaching of the Pastorals (Tit 2:7; 1 Tim 4:12). He should set the proof to show that no less than *probity of character* suffices for a "bishop", and that in Christianity authority is contingent upon character and not on age, talents or ingenuity (1 Tim 4: 12)¹⁷. In fact, Paul presents himself as such a model in Phi 3:17 and 2 Thes 3:9, where the same term *typos* (model or example) is used.

The "bishop" becomes the model for the people in so far as he constantly engages himself (cf. "fight the good fight of the faith": 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 2:3-4) in the pursuit of virtues (both personal and social) and the avoidance of vices, especially that of "love of money which is the root of all evils" (6:10). He will achieve this only when he is ready to be constantly challenged by the goal of "eternal life" (6:12-13), in the attainment of a life of "godliness with contentment" (6:6-11). The episcopal *charism* which he has received by the imposition of hands (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6), is God's own spirit given him in the attainment of such high ideals¹⁸.

17. Dornier, *op. cit.* 81-82; Guthrie, *op.cit.* 96-97.195; Cipriani, *op cit.* 100

18. The author seems to imply clearly in 1 Tim 4: 14 and 2 Tim 1: 6 that the episcopal consecration is not conferred by popular deputation but by God as a gift. The term *charisma* would denote more the gift than the office, the insistence being on the supernatural operation of the Spirit. That it is an internal grace and not external operation is shown by the preposition *en* (in Timothy) used in 1 Tim 4:14; cf. Conzelmann, H., *charisma* TDNT IX 406, thinks it refers here to the office! Notice in this connection that Ignatius of Antioch calls Jesus Christ himself as "the Bishop". cf. Poly; *Intr*; Rom. 9

All that has been said of the "bishops" of the Pastors can be applied also to the "elders" excepting that the "bishop" is the "first" among equals in so far as he presides over the community, and the *true Bishop* being only "the Apostle".

The "bishop-elder" has the function of "laying on of hands" (1 Tim 4:14; 5:22) as Paul himself (2 Tim 1:6). Preaching and teaching are entrusted to both the "bishop" (Tit 1:9; 2 Tim 2:2) and the "elders" (1 Tim 5:17). The "bishop-elder" presides over and takes care of the house of God (1 Tim 3:5; 5:17) not as a master but as a steward of God (Tit 1:7). In this sense there is no "patron" or ruler in the Church; the Lord God himself being *the only Master and Ruler*. The "bishop-presbyter" as custodian and trustee has only the duty of shepherding and guarding the flock (cf. Acts 20:28-29). That this *trusteeship* he receives from God and not from the community is seen from the fact that either Paul the Apostle ("true Bishop") or his representative (Titus) ordains the "elders" (Tit 1:5; 1 Tim 5:22) or the "elders" themselves as a college do this (1 Tim 4:14)¹⁹. Thus we witness the transition period in a state of fluidity. Besides and beyond strict definitions and rationalisations, it is the floating reality in all its ambiguity that comes to the fore, impressing, however, on the reader the unique fact of unbroken chain of *authorized succession* of ordained ministers in the Church.

Deacons and Bishop/Elders

The earliest allusion to *deacons* is found in the Acts 6:1-6, where their duty is depicted mainly as practical (distribution of food etc). They were legitimately appointed for this service by the apostles themselves. But the term "diakonos" as referring to an "office" is never used by Luke.

19. Guthrie, *op. cit.* 98, is of the opinion that the "elders" here were associated with Paul in the ceremony of the laying on of hands, and are specifically mentioned here to draw attention to the *corporate attestation* of Timothy's commission.

In the Pastorals the terms deriving from *diakonein* - to "serve", occur 9 times (cf. *diakoneo* - 1 Tim 3:10-13; 2 Tim 1:18; *diakonia* - 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 4:5-11; *diakonos* - 1 Tim 3:8-12; 4:6). Of these, only those occurring in 1 Tim 3:8-13 strictly refer to "the office" of diaconate ministry²⁰ as complementing that of the "elders" or "bishop", and being subordinate to them. (Cf. elsewhere in the article for the existence and justification of "deaconesses.").

In 1 Tim 3:8-13 the ministry of diaconate is presented with a stereotyped list of character-qualifications, but without reference to any relation to the "elders" or "bishop". However, after a section on "the office of bishop" (3:1-7), by-passing the natural treatment on "presbyters" the author goes on to deal with the "deacons"!

The *sure saying* ("pistos ho logos") of 3:1 is specified by a list of moral qualities required of a "bishop" (2-7) adapted, of course, from contemporary societal norms; and the *deacons* are expected to have almost the same qualities (8-10.12-13), as also the *deaconesses* (11). Nothing is said here of the role of the Holy Spirit or of ordination or of what these leaders actually did!

Of what is said of the "deacons" nothing is specific that cannot be demanded of any ordinary Christian, or for that matter, any good human being in society²¹. Since a father of a family has responsibilities towards his wife, children, slaves and the making of wealth, both the "bishop" and the "deacons" are expected in the same tenor, to "manage their households well" (3,5.12).

All these point out to the fact that the leaders of the "church" (be they "bishop or "deacons"), were expected to measure up to the standards of people in similar position in civic society.

20. 1 Tim 1:12 speaks of Paul's service of the Lord; 1 Tim 4:6 and 2 Tim 4:5 refer to Timothy's duties as a minister of the word; 2 Tim 1:18 points out to the service of Onesiphorus; 2 Tim 4:11 speaks of Mark's service for Paul; cf. Beyer, H. W., *diakonos TDNT* II, 88-93

21. Dibelius, M., Conzelmann, H., *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia 1972) 158-159.

But at the same time the author displays his ingenuity by creatively adapting civic models to serve his purpose of explaining christian duties, namely *service of faith* (cf. 3, 5b-7, 9, 13).

From all what we have said with regard to church leadership ("Deaconesses/ Order of Widows"; "Episkopos / Presbyteroi"; "Deacons / Bishop / Elders") one thing is clear, that different traditions of transitional "church" are portrayed here without any attempt at harmonization and synthesis. The author neither is interested in showing how "deaconesses" (1 Tim 3:11) could function along with the "class of widows (1 Tim 5:3-6), nor does he answer the problem of "bishop" - "elders" relationship (compare 1 Tim 3:1-7 and 5:17-22 with Tit 1:5-9), or "Deacon" - "Bishop" relationship (3:1.7 and 8-13). "He seems to be saying to churches": Consider these various ways of organizing the "church". They have proved to be very useful in *preserving, handing on, and developing* the apostolic tradition: they have been effective in combating heresy"²². In fact the Pastorals have given the post-Vatican Church ample scope and freedom in the organization and revitalizing of her ministries, since we, as the Pastorals, are going through a time of transition and change²³.

"Household" and the "People"

The impression given so far may have been, to think of the "church" of the Pastorals as a hierarchy of "offices" built on the juridical basis of precedence, position or dignity. But the truth is far from that. As we have indicated repeatedly nothing was crystallized and everything was in a flux. May be the tendency towards structuration was there, but not clear-cut structures themselves, as have been listed later in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch in the 2nd century ²⁴.

22, Karris, *op. cit* 74-75

23. Raja. R. J. "The Third World Church in its march towards the 21st century" - National Catholic Reporter (Kansas Nov. 30-1984) 17; see also other articles (7-22) written in this special anniversary issue.

24: cf. Ignatius of Antioch: Philadel 7:1; Magn 6:1; Trall 7:2.

More than the hierarchy itself, it is the service-aspect of these "offices" that is insisted upon and gives the ecclesiology of the author a new horizon.

The comparison of the "church" to a *family* or *household* ("oikos") occurs in all the Pastorals where it is used metaphorically²⁵. One who cannot manage his family is unfit for government in the "church". This sound principle is universal for the author (cf. Mt 25:14ff). Thus the similarity between the "church" and family brings about both an impressive *dignity* to christian home-life and at the same time reveals the *tender intimacy of life* that should pervade mutual relations in the "church", such as what Paul has said elsewhere: "So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household (*oikeioi* tou theou) of God" (Eph 2:19). Both the leaders and the christian community are one family, thanks to baptism which has incorporated both into the same "church". The former is leader in so far as he serves and not as one who lords over the community (cf. Lk 12:37; 22:27; Jo 12:25-26).

Besides meaning a "family", the term "oikos" also denotes a *building*, a house or temple. In this sense the "church" is the place where *God himself dwells and acts* in the midst of his people.

What Jacob said after the vision of the angel, "this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house" (cf. *Oikos Theou*: Gen 28:22), has travelled a long way through the temple (*oikos*) that Solomon built for God (cf. LXX 3 Kgs 6:8; 1 Chr 28:10) to culminate in the "Church" (*oikos Theou* 1 Tim 3:15 etc). All the sacrality and cult that were part of the temple are now substituted by the "church". God now dwells in the "church" as previously in the temple, and this temple ("church") we are (2 Cor 6:16).

25. The term *oikos* is found in the metaphorical sense in 1 Tim 3, 4, 5, 12; 5: 4; 2 Tim 1: 16; 4: 19 and Tit 1: 11. The term *oikos theou* ("household of God") in 1 Tim 3:15, immediately refers to the church of Ephesus, but with greater reason to the universal Church. cf. Cipriani *op. cit.* 92-93; Dornier, *op. cit.* 66-72

Thus the "Church" is the *People of God*, who has been redeemed and purified to become "a people of his own, who are zealous for good deeds" (Tit 2: 14). The God of Exodus who redeemed Israel from slavery and guided them to the land of promise (cf. Ex 15: 13; 16: 6 etc), has made of them his own people saying "you shall be my people and I will be your God" (Ez 3:28), a great privilege indeed. But this *privilege* at the same time imposed on them the *duty* that they remain faithful to YHWH (cf. Dt. 5-8).

Exactly in the same way, being the "house of God" (becoming a new people), the "Church" has its *rights* as well as *duties*. The fact that the Christians are called to be saints and share in the sanctity of God (Rom 1:17; 1 Cor 1:2; Col 3:12; 1 Pet 2:9 etc), by the same token they are obliged to be "zealous for good deeds" (cf. 1 Tim 2:10; 5:10; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17; Tit 1:16; 6:1).

These *good deeds* are enumerated in 1 Tim 5: 10 (in the context of "widows") as, "bringing up orphans, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints and relieving the afflicted". As the author drew up from the societal norms to describe the character of the "bishop" 1 Tim 3: 1-7), so here he is at his creative best in setting forth norms for christian living. Thus *charity in concrete deeds* becomes the criterion by which christian life and conduct is judged. This indeed is to be the "house of God", "God's church" (1 Tim 3: 5.15)²⁶.

"The pillar and support of truth"

The salvific and sanctifying presence of the living God makes the "church" "the pillar and support (bulwark) of truth" (1 Tim 3:15). The previous imagery of the 'house' is continued through the two metaphors that denote strength or robustness and endurance or basis²⁷.

26. There are only 3 places in the Pastorals where the term "ekklesia" (church) is used, namely 1 Tim 3: 5- 15; 5: 16. They surely refer to the Church as a whole and not merely to the local congregation. Cf. Schmidt, K. L, *Ekklesia TDNT* III, 506-509.

27. The term used for bulwark is *hedraioma* and it means that the 'church is established, which protects and defends the truth against

The "church" receives this robustness and endurance from the "truth". The "church" possesses the "truth" and the "truth" confirms the "church" as if through mutual interaction. Thus the "church" becomes "indefectible". Since the "church" is not identified with the "truth", there is always the scope for 'her advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her'. (Vat II: D. V:8).

The "truth" is further explained in the term "mystery of our religion", which is the *mystery of Christ* himself as given in the hymn in verse 16. Although this mystery is entrusted in a special way to the pastors of the "church" (1 Tim 3:14-15), all believers have a responsibility to it, in so far as all belong to the "household".

The imagery of the building is continued through another metaphor in 2 Tim 2:19 where the author uses the term *foundation (themelios)*, to denote the *solidity of the church* against those who subvert the truth (1 Tim 2:18). The solidity itself is guaranteed since God has put his own *seal of authentication*²⁸ by a double inscription, namely, that first he knows who are the true believers and who are the trouble makers (cf. 2 Tim 2:17ff; Num 16:5), and secondly, he orders the believers to avoid what he abhors (cf. 2 Tim 2:19; Is 26:13; 52:11). Hence the coexistence of sinners and saints (2 Tim 2:20-21) does not in any way destroy the firm foundation of the "church".

The "sure foundation" (2 Tim 2:19) and the "pillar and support of truth" (1 Tim 3:15) both guarantee the "orthodoxy" of all the believers (pastors and people,

the confusion of myths. It gives the faith and thinking of individuals a sure ground in confession. No longer God alone but also the Church of God now guarantee the permanence of the *aletheia* (truth). The steadfastness of faith has now become loyalty to the church and the confession" cf. Stauffer, E., *hedraioma* TDNT II, 364.

28. The term *seal (sphragis)* is used here metaphorically as (in Rom 4:11; 1 Cor 9:2) as a sign of authentication and trustworthiness. Cf. Fitzner, G., *sphragis* TDNT VII, 948-950

theologians and simple faithful, charismatics and non-charismatics) and sustain them in their weakness and failure.

We may not fail to note here that although all these affirmations about the "church" are written to the "church" at Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3), yet they are equally applicable to the universal Church, since each individual "church" in particular localities constitutes together "the church of the living God"²⁹. The Church universal transcends all particularities in so far as it is the fulness of the body of Christ, the People of God (cf. Num 16:3; 20:4; Mic 2:5; Jer 12:7 as well as Gal 6:16; Heb 3:2; 10:21 etc)³⁰.

"Sound doctrine and sound faith" (Tit 1: 9- 13)

Since both at Ephesus (1 Tim) and at Crete (Tit) heterodox doctrines had penetrated the fold (cf. Tit 1:10-16; 1 Tim 1: 3-10; 4: 1-10)³¹ the author warns the leaders seriously to keep watch over these³². They must be men who are well versed in *sound doctrine* (1 Tim 1: 10; 2 Tim 4: 3; Tit 1: 9; 2:1)³³ and at the same time *apt teachers* (1 Tim 3: 2; 2 Tim 2: 4). Their teaching must not be merely refutation of errors and rebuking of heretics

29. Notice Paul when addressing the particular churches say: "the Church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor 1: 2; 2 Cor 1: 1) etc.

30. Dornier, *op. cit.* 66-68

31. The term *heterodidaskalein* is used only in the Pastorals in 1 Tim 1: 3 & 4: 3. Literally it means "to teach another doctrine" than what Paul had taught and not necessarily a false doctrine. Cf. Spicq, *op. cit.* 20

32. Since 1 Tim and Tit are exhortatory letters (in comparison to 2 Tim which is a "letter home" or "letter to a friend") the author uses quite *strong terms* used in the army (*parangello* - I charge, I command etc in 1 Tim 1: 3; 4:11; 5:7; 6:13-17) and often in the *imperative* (cf. Tit 2:1-6; 3:1; 1 Tim 5:7-11; 19:20 etc) to show that they must seriously warn the trouble-makers in the community. Cf. Karris, *op. cit.* 48-50; Guthrie *op. cit.* 57-59.

33. The term "sound doctrine" (*hygiainousa didaskalia*) is found only in the Pastorals, and it means the authentic message of the Gospel which is also expressed through moral and spiritual teachings, as opposed to "vain discussions" (*mataiologia* 1 Tim 1: 6) or fables and genealogies etc (1 Tim 1:3-7; Tit 1:10-16; 3:9 etc).

(cf. *elengkein* Tit 1:9-13, 2:13, 1 Tim 3:10 etc.) which is rather negative, but encouraging and teaching the faithful in the line of positive exhortation (cf. *paralein* Tit 1:9-13, 1 Tim 5:1-2, 2 Tim 4:1) and at the same time "teaching" (cf. *diakkein* 1 Tim 4:11, 2 Tim 2:2) "the words of the faith and of the good doctrine" to all.

As belonging to his prophetic or teaching office, Vat II has not said anything other than the Pastorals will regard to the principal duties of the bishop among which "the preaching of the Gospel occupies an eminent place". As authentic teachers who not only preach but put into practice what they preach, the bishops must "make faith bear fruit and vigilantly ward off any errors which threaten their flock" (Vat II, L. G. 23, citing 1 Tim 4:1-4).

Ecclesiology and Christology

Having reviewed the fluidity of the structures and at the same time their being built-up on the solidity of the truth, we may now look at the *ekklesia* they purport to present.

No better text than 1 Tim 3:15-16, which is the most important pericope in all the Pastorals, "the culminating doctrinal point of the Epistle and indeed the key to all the Pastorals"³⁴ may help us in our enquiry.

The "Church" is first and foremost a *Familia* ("household of God" 15) in which one experiences a sense of belonging. As opposed to a "closed" society, it is open-handed, welcoming, offering warmth and hospitality to everyone. It is a place where relationships are cultivated between the wife and the husband, the children and the parents, the slave and the master, the pariah and the brahmin, the black and the white—a place where everyone feels at home, even the widows (cf. 1 Tim 5:3-16) since it is "the household of God".

34. Spicq, *op. cit.* 104

With the image of the family goes also certain order which in the case of the "Church" is the plan of "the living God" (1 Tim 3:15-4:16) who with the salvation of all and who directs the "Church" to its goal (1 Tim 2:4). The Christ-event becomes thus the basis and norm that regulates the "household of God" (cf. 2:1-3, 13:15).

In this sense 1 Tim 3:14-16 projects us backwards (2:1-3, 13) and forwards (4:1-5:2). The "Church is ordered for a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way" (2:2) thanks to the fact that the Gospel is "preached among the nations and believed on in the world" (3:6). Hence the need for order in both families and civic society is inspired upon (2:1-3, 13). At the same time instructions are given with regard to various members of the "Church" in the following sections (4:1-16: Thursday, 4:1-5:2 widows, 5:17-22 elders, 3:1-2: slaves etc). Orders and instructions are therefore for the welfare of the "household of God" and not vice-versa.

Here is a vision of the "Church" that shares its truth with all and hence engages herself in missionary activity to all the nations. One sees in this "Church" a bul-work that would eliminate all the human and earthly dimensions of salvation. One realizes in this "Church" a need for order if it is to be faithful to its vocation to preach the Good News to the world. Behind all these activities one perceives the vision of God who in Christ is in love with the world, creation and especially mankind. On this love of God, which rests on and is at the same time assured by the promises of God (1 Tim 4:8 2 Tim 1:1) rests the hope of the Churches³⁵.

Conclusion

From the above survey of the ecclesiology of the Pastorals, it is more than clear that the author does not exhibit himself as one championing ecclesiastical law and order. The structures of the "Church", as displayed here, and the images, are quite fluid, typical of a time of transition and change, before they are codified into a well-

35. Karris, *op. cit.* 77-82

defined ecclesiastical system (as is presented by Ignatius of Antioch in his writings)³⁶.

What is transparent is that there should be some structure to guarantee the authentic transmission of *apostolic teaching* (cf. Acts 2:42; Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 15:1f; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 2:8; 3:10 etc) supported by a practice of *good deeds* (cf. 1 Tim 2:10; 5:10; 6:18; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17; Tit 2:7-14; 3:1; 8:14).

Both the apostolic teaching and the good deeds of the christians are ultimately to be patterned on "the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim 6:3), "the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15) which is the *Gospel* (2 Tim 2:9; Tit 2:5)³⁷. The guarantee for the faithful transmission is the *Holy Spirit* himself (2 Tim 1:14) who is the "Spirit of truth" (Jo 14:17). Once the "preaching of the Gospel" is assured, the structure that best suits the situation or a new one could be devised, since the latter is for the safeguarding and furtherance of the former. The local "church" of the future and its organisation shall and must arise from our preaching and hearing of "the word of God" in one word, from our *docility to the Word*, which is the true touchstone of any reform of structures in the "Church". The Church herself must be ready for any change by being a "listener" to the Word itself and not just a custodian and "prolonger" of today's deficiencies, partial views, divided communities or theological predilections. This is to be truly a Church in transition, and the post-Vatican Church is just that.

36. Cf note 23

37. In 1 Tim 6:3 "the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ" may mean the words proclaimed by Jesus himself or words concerning Jesus but preached by others. The commentators are divided. While Spicq (*op. cit.* 186) proposes the existence of the Gospel of Luke at Ephesus at that time, Kelly, J. N. D., *The Pastoral Epistles* (London 1963) 134, thinks it refers to "the word of the cross" (1 Cor 1:18; Col 3:16 etc) as preached by Paul. We may not be wrong in saying that it could refer to the Gospel, "the word of truth" for which the apostles were made ministers (cf. Eph 3:6-7; Col 1:23), so that Paul could say it is *my Gospel* (Rom 2:16; 16:25)

The Church in the Synoptic Gospels *

The term "church" (*ekklesia*) is found only thrice in the synoptic gospels (Mt 16:18; 18:17). But that, certainly, does not mean that the theme is not important. The church is the community of Jesus' followers (Mt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; 14:27), the community of his "disciples" (Mt 28:19). It is the community of those who are "with him" (Mk 3:14), those who continue with him in all his trials (Lk 22:28). It is the community of those ransomed by Jesus (Mk 10:45), his "little flock" (Lk 12:32) "his household" (Mt 10:25). It is the Bridegroom's party (Mt 9:15; Lk 5:34), the community of Jesus' "servants" (Lk 17:10), of his "friends" (Lk 12:4).

The gospels were gradually formed and finally written down within the church. In Jesus' life and ministry, and in the life and ministry of the disciples in his company as presented in the gospels, the church always recognized the beginnings of her own life and ministry. She recognized herself as the continuation of Christ, her mission as the continuation of his mission. In them she found inspiration and guidelines for the fulfilment of her own mission.

Thus in this study I propose to analyse the mission of the church as found in the synoptic gospels. I shall examine only two aspects of that mission: 1) The mission of the church is that of Christ. 2) The church should fulfil that mission only the way Christ himself fulfilled it. I shall then conclude the study with a few reflections.

I. The Mission of the Church

The mission of the church is the continuation of the mission of Jesus. The mission of Jesus is well summed up in two Isian texts quoted by the evangelists with that purpose:

* Some portions and many references in this article had to be omitted for want of space (General Editor).

Is 42:1-4 (Mt 12:18-21): "Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will any one hear his voice in the streets; he will not break a bruised reed or quench a smouldering wick, till he brings justice to victory; and in his name will the Gentiles hope."

Is 61:1-2 (Lk 4:18-19): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

I shall now examine five aspects of the mission of Jesus as also found in the two texts quoted above and show how they are at the same time also constitutive elements of the mission of the church.

1. Preaching

a) There are a few texts that refer to Jesus' preaching in a rather general way;

Mt 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'."

Mt 4:23 "And he went about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom."

Mt 9:35 "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom."

Mk 1:14-15 "...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel'."

Lk 4:43 "...he said to them, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose'."

Lk 8:1 "...he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God."

It is evident from these texts that the main point in Jesus' preaching is the kingdom of God. He preaches the arrival of the kingdom of God. God's kingdom, his rule, is present in the very person of Jesus, in his works, in his teaching, in his ministry. But man must respond to that offer - this is the other important element in Jesus' preaching - by repentance. They should change their heart and mind, change their way of thinking and living, change their entire outlook. They should turn away from their evil ways and turn to God by accepting Jesus' message.

b) It is exactly the same mission that Jesus gives to his followers, to the church. This is evident from the following texts:

Mt 10:9. Here Jesus instructs the disciples what they should preach - "...and say to them, 'the kingdom of God has come near you'" (the same instruction found also in Lk 10:9). Mk 6:12. "So they went out and preached that men might repent."

Mk 13: 10. "And the gospel must first be preached to all nations" (of course, 'by Jesus' followers'; meaning 'by the church'),

Lk 9:2. "and he sent them out to preach the kingdom "

This mission to preach is again given to the disciples by Jesus after his resurrection:

Mt 28:18-20. "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

Mk 16:20. "Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to the whole creation."

Mk 16:20. "And they went forth and preached everywhere."

Lk 24:47. "And that repentance and forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations."

So, like Jesus the disciples also preached the kingdom of God, the gospel and repentance.

2. Healing

a) The importance of this aspect in the ministry of Jesus is evident from the prominence it is given in the gospels. There are, first of all, a lot of texts that speak of

Jesus' healing ministry in a general fashion. Wherever Jesus goes crowds follow him. They bring to him all sorts of sick people, the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the lame, the possessed, and Jesus heals them all (Mt 4:23; Mk 1:32-34; Lk 4:40-42 etc.). Then there are numerous stories that narrate the various cures performed by Jesus. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law (Mt 8:14-16, etc.), a paralysed man (Mk 2:1-12, etc), a man with a withered hand (Lk 6:6-11 etc.) a woman with an issue of blood (Mt 9:20-22;) the centurion's servant (Mt 8:3-13), a deaf and dumb person (Mk 7:3-37), an epileptic (Mt 17:14-20) and a woman bent down for eighteen years (Lk 13:10-17). He restores sight to several blind people (Mt 9:27-31; Mk 8:22-26; Lk 18:35-43), cleanses lepers (Mt 8:2-4; Mk 1:40-45; Lk 5:12-16), frees several people from the power of evil spirits (Mt 8:28-34; 1:32-34; 12:22; 15:21-28; Mk 1:23-28; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 9:14-29; Lk 4:31-37; 8:27-39; 9:37-43; 11:14). To this list one must also add the two stories where Jesus raises the dead: the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mt 9:13-19) and that of the only son of the widow of Nain (Lk 7:11-17).

This ministry of healing is so important that crowds express their admiration for Jesus in terms of his healing power (cf. Mk 7:37). When threatened by Herod Jesus speaks of his mission only in terms of his healing ministry. "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow and the third day I finish my course.'" (Lk 13:32) He even refers to it as a proof that he is the Messiah: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up..." (Mt 11:4-5)

b) The ministry of healing is also part of the mission given by Jesus to his disciples: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons." (Mt 10:8) "And he called to him the twelve, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits." (Mk 6:7) "And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." (Mk 6:13) "And these signs will accompany those who believe: in

my name they will cast out demons...they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mk 16-17) "Whenever you enter a town and they receive you...heal the sick in it." (Lk 10:8-9) "And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases." (Lk 9:6) "And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere." (Lk 9:6)

3. Forgiving sins

a) This is related to Jesus' preaching of repentance. Jesus not only invited people to repent, to turn away from their evil ways, from their sinful selves, to God, but he also imparted forgiveness. Not only did he explain God's forgiving love in charming parables like those of the lost son (Lk 15:11-32), the lost sheep (Mt 18:10-14; Lk 15:4-7), the lost coin (Lk 15:8-10), the debtor servant (Mt 18:23-35), and the prayer of the publican and the pharisee (Lk 18:9-14), but he also manifested God's forgiveness in his own ministry. He let people experience it in his ministry: To the paralysed man who is brought to him Jesus says, "Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven" (Mt 9:2; Mk 2:5; Lk 5:20). He grants forgiveness to the sinful woman in the city in Lk 7:36-50. In v. 48 he tells her: "your sins are forgiven." Jesus accepts the hospitality of Zacheus, a chief tax collector, a 'sinner' in the eyes of the public (Lk 19:1-10). Jesus includes a tax collector in the company of his disciples (Mt 9:9-13; Mk 2:14-17; Lk 5:27-32).

b) Jesus gave his disciples power to forgive sins. In Mt 16:19 Jesus tells Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven". In Mt 18:18 the same power is extended on a wider level to all his followers: "Truly I say to you whatever you bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."¹

1 This point is well brought out in Jn 20:23: "If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any they are retained."

Jesus also insists that mutual forgiveness be a characteristic mark of those who follow him. Forgiveness is something they should experience first on the level of their relationship with God (their being forgiven by God), then on the level of their relationship with one another (mutual forgiveness). In the only prayer that Jesus taught his disciples he wants them to pray: "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors" (also Lk 11:4 Mt 6:12). "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Mt 6:14-15) "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go first to be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Mt 5:23-24) Jesus' disciples are to forgive "not seven times but seventy times seven" (Mt 18:21-22, Lk 17:4). Jesus concludes the parable of the debtor servant who refused to forgive his fellow servant: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." (Mt 18:35) The end of the parable of the lost son also brings out the same lesson. Jesus condemns the attitude of the elder brother who refused to understand and share the loving forgiveness of his father towards his brother (Lk 15:25-32). Thus forgiveness is a necessary condition for one's prayers to be heard, for one's sacrifices to be accepted by God.

4. Compassion

a) Jesus' ministry is marked by compassion for others. It characterises his dealings with people. He sees crowds like sheep without a shepherd and he teaches them (Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34). He has compassion of the sick and he heals them (Mt 14:14; 20:34; Mk 1:41). He is filled with compassion for the widow of Nain and he raises her son to life (Lk 7:13). He has compassion on hungry crowds and he multiplies bread to feed them (Mt 15:32; Mk 8:2). Jesus is merciful and compassionate to all, but especially to the underprivileged in the society, those who were looked

down upon by others. He promises blessedness to the poor, the meek, those who hunger and thirst, those who weep, those who are persecuted (Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23). He associates with those who were despised as sinners (Mt 9:10-13; Mk 2:15-17; Lk 5:30; 7:36-49; 15:2; 19:7). When he is attacked by his opponents for doing that, he has recourse to Hos 6:2 on two occasions to justify his conduct: "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice'." (Mt 9:13; 12:7)²

The same compassionate and sympathetic attitude is also evident in his dealings with his disciples. He is most tolerant and patient with them. He puts up with their slowness of mind to understand (Mt 15:16; 16:8), and their lack of faith (Mt 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20). He even tolerates a traitor in his company.

b) Jesus demands the same thing from his followers. In the parable of the debtor servant the master reprimands him: "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me, and should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Mt 18:32-33). In the parable of the good samaritan the lawyer who had questioned Jesus agrees that it was "the one who showed mercy" who proved himself a neighbour to the man who had fallen into the hands of robbers, and then Jesus gives him the injunction: "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10:37). While in Mt 5:48 Jesus sums up all his teaching in the one demand "you, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"; in Lk 6:36 Jesus says: "Be merciful even as your Father is merciful." In Mt 5:7 Jesus promises mercy to those who show mercy.

5. Freedom

Jesus takes the scribes and the pharisees to task for turning the law into an unbearable burden and laying

² Jesus is harsh only to the hypocrites, people who relied not on God but on themselves and despised others (Mt 23:13-36; Lk 11:42-52). There is only one text in the gospels where Jesus is explicitly said to be angry, and there he is angry with the pharisees: "And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart" (Mk 3:5).

it on the shoulders of others without ever bothering to help them carry it (Mt 23:4). Jesus adopts a very different attitude towards the law. However he makes it clear that he has not come to destroy the law, but to bring it to perfection (Mt 5:7). Like the great prophets of the OT Jesus demands a return to the genuine spirit of the law. Jesus simply ignores many a so-called tradition of their fathers. He ate with unwashed hands (Lk 11:38). He associated with outcasts in the society (Mk 2:17). He even praised the human qualities of the samaritans (Lk 10:29-37), people who were treated contemptuously by the jews. He allowed lepers to approach him freely (Mt 8:2; Mk 1:40; Lk 5:12). He did not keep the sabbath the way it was interpreted by the scribes and the pharisees. When he is accused of breaking the sabbath (Mt 12:14; Mk 3:6; Lk 6:11) he defends himself on various grounds: "the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath" (Mt 12:8; Mk 2:28; Lk 6:5); "sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mk 2:27); what is forbidden on the sabbath is to do evil, but it is always legitimate to do good even on the sabbath (Mk 3:4; Lk 6:9).

b) Jesus initiated his disciples into that spirit of freedom. He lays on his followers a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light (Mt 11:30). They are to keep the law not simply in its letter but in its spirit (Mt 5:17-48). When on a certain occasion they ate with unwashed hands and were attacked by the pharisees, Jesus defended them (Mt 15:1-20); also when on a sabbath they picked up ears of corn and ate them (Mt 12:1-8).

II. The way the church is to fulfil her mission

The church can fulfil her mission only the way Jesus himself fulfilled it. He did it by a life of humility, by accepting suffering and death. If that is the path marked out by Christ the church has to follow it.

Leaving aside all other aspects I shall develop only two points, namely :

1. The way of humility

a) Jesus was conscious of the common conception about the Messiah prevalent among the people of his day. No more a free nation, the people of Isreal expected a political Messiah who would set them free from the Romans. They expected a fierce messenger of Yahweh who would wipe out all the wicked, that is, all the enemies of the people of God (Mk 3:7-12; Lk 3:7-9). But Jesus made it clear to them right from the start that he had no intention of assuming any such role. He thwarted every attempt at people trying to make him king (cf. Mk 6:45; 11:1-10 Mt 21:1-11; Lk 19:29-38). Jesus deliberately presents himself as the king of Zech 9:9, "humble and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass". He always lived with his disciples as a man who had "nowhere to lay his head" (Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58), a man with absolutely no political ambitions. Jesus was among his disciples "as one who serves" (Lk 22:27), as one who came not to be served but to serve (Mk 10:45). He was gentle and lowly in heart (Mt 11:29).

b) Jesus wanted his followers to assume the same attitude. But he found it most difficult to teach them that lesson.

When called by Jesus they left all things and followed him (Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20). Later texts make it more than clear that they followed him with political and material ambitions:

On one occasion speaking in the name of the twelve Peter asks Jesus: "Lo, we have left all things and followed you, what then shall we have?" (Mt 19:27) On another occasion two of them, James and John, approach Jesus with the request that they should be given the first places in his kingdom (Mk 10:35-37; Mt 20:20-21). Very often we find the disciples disputing among themselves as to who of them was to be the greatest in the kingdom (Mt 18:1). The same dispute arises even at the last supper (Lk 22:24). At times they even seemed to stand in the way of Jesus, failing utterly, or even obstinately refusing, to understand his mission (cf. Mt 16:22; Mk 8:33).

Jesus goes on correcting their misconceptions ! Those who want to follow him must renounce all they have (Lk 14:33), sell all they have, give the money to the poor and follow him (Mt 19:21). They must even "hate" their father and mother and follow him (Lk 14:26). They must also deny themselves and carry their crosses everyday (Mk 8:34). They should cast away all anxieties. They should not worry about their food and drink, about their clothing, about their life, about their future (Mt 6:25-34). This total dependence on the Father's goodness is particularly expected of them in their ministry of preaching the gospel. When Jesus sends them out he instructs them: "Take no gold, no silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff" (Mt 10:9-10; Mk 6:8; Lk 9:3; 10:4; 22:35). They should not desire places of honour at feasts, of first seats in the synagogues; they should rather love the lowest place (Lk 14:7-11). They should not expect respectful salutations from others or wish to be called rabbis or teachers or masters (Mt 23:6-10; Mk 12:38-39; Lk 11:43; 20:46). They should not try to lord it over others or make their authority felt (Mt 20:25; Mk 10:42; Lk 22:25). Any one who wants to be great in Jesus' kingdom must become as small as a little child (Mt 18:2-4; Mk 10:14-15; Lk 18:16-17). Any one who wants to become the first, the greatest, must become the last, the servant and slave of all (Mt 20:26-27; Mk 9:35; 10:43-44; Lk 22:26). For the followers of Jesus there is only one kind of power, that of humility, only one kind of greatness, that of being small, unimportant³.

2. The way of suffering and death

a) Jesus incurred the hostility of the scribes, the pharisees, the elders and the chief priests right from the outset of his ministry. They must have been jealous of his popularity - people thronged to him wherever he went (Mt 8:1, Mk 1:33-37; 2:2; 3:7-8; 5:24; 8:1; 10:1; Lk 5:1-15; 14:25), marvelled at his teaching (Mk 1:22; 2:2; 11:18; Lk 1:32;

3. The washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus in Jn 13:1-15 is also to be interpreted as Jesus' last attempt to teach his disciples the lesson of true greatness.

19:48) and were amazed at the miracles he performed (Mk 2:12; 5:20; 7:37; Lk 5:26). They must have been greatly disillusioned with his messianic ideas which certainly did not agree with theirs. They must have found it almost impossible to recognize a messenger of God in a man who did not observe the sabbath (Mt 12:9-14; Mk 3:1-5; Lk 6:6-14; 14:1-5) and set aside many of their traditional positions (Mt 12:1-8; Mk 2:18-19; 7:1-16; Lk 5:33-35; 6:1-5; 1:28). His claims to be greater than Jonah, greater than Solomon (Mt 12:38-42; Lk 11:29-32), greater than the temple (Mt 12:6), his claims that he could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days (Mk 14:58; 15:29), that he could forgive sins (Mt 9:3-6; Mk 2:5-10; Lk 5:20-24; 7:49), all these must have infuriated them. This hostility manifested itself in many ways. This must have made Jesus gradually come to the conclusion that he was going to die an immature and violent death in Jerusalem at the hands of the Jewish hierarchy. He must also have understood his fate in the light of the experience of John the Baptist.

Jesus must have reflected particularly on the Servant songs in Is. The Servant bore the griefs and sorrows of others; he was wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities and carried them on himself (Is 23:4-8). When Jesus says that he came "to give his life as ransom for many" (Mk 10:45) or that his body was to be "given" for many, or that his blood was to be "poured out" for many (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:19-20), he is certainly thinking of the Servant of Yahweh. Like the Servant he was to crown his mission, to achieve it, with his passion and death⁴.

b) Jesus' followers are to walk the same path. They are not to expect any better treatment than that which was meted out to their master (Mt 10:24-25; Lk 6:40). They will have to lose their life in order to find it, to save it (Mt 10:39; 16:25; 8:35; Lk 9:24; 17:33). They will have to

4 In Jn 19:30 Jesus on the cross says: "It is finished". In the light of Jn 4:34 and 17:4, the text means that his death is the perfect achievement of his life-work, of his mission.

drink the cup which Jesus himself drank (Mt 20:22-23; Mk 10:38-39), and baptised with the baptism with which Jesus himself was baptised (Mk 10:38-39; Lk 12:50). They will be "persecuted" in all possible ways (Mt 5:10-12, Lk 11:49). They will be "hated" by all men (Mt 10:22; Mk 13:13). People will speak ill of them (Mt 5:11; Lk 6:22). They "will be dragged before governors and kings" (Mk 13:9). They will be delivered up (Mt 10:19). They will be "scourged" in the synagogues (Mk 13:9). They will be "killed" (Mt 10:21). Some of them will be "crucified" (Mt 23:34)⁵.

As in the case of Jesus so in the case of his followers also suffering and death will achieve and crown their mission. This is evident from the fact that it is his cup that they are to drink, it is his baptism with which they are to be baptised (Mt 20:22-23; Mk 10:38-39). Again in practically all the texts mentioned above one finds expressions like "for my sake" (Mt 10:18-39; 16:25; Mk 8:35; 13:9; Lk 9:24), "for my name's sake" (Mk 13:13; Lk 21:12), "on my account" (Mt 5:11), "on account of the Son of man" (Lk 6:22). Mk has still another very interesting expression 'for the sake of the gospel' (8:35). Thus the disciples partake of Jesus' passion and death. They suffer on account of him and for the gospel. Persecution offers them an occasion to bear witness to Christ (Mt 10:18; Mk 13:9).

III. A few reflections

I. The mission of Jesus' followers is so much Jesus mission that the world's acceptance or rejection of them is in fact acceptance or rejection of Jesus himself (Mt 10:40; Lk 10:16). The same thing is evident from the fact that the cities that do not accept the disciples of Jesus will have the same fate as those cities that did not welcome Jesus (Mt 10:14-15; 11:20-24; Lk 10:10-15). That means the church is in a way the extension of the person of Christ. She is Christ-in-the world, Christ-with-men, Christ-for-men, just as Jesus was Emmanuel "God with us" (Mt 1:23). That certainly is a tremendous responsibility.

5. All these expressions are to be found in Jesus' sayings about his passion and death.

2. The church's mission is to preach the kingdom. She is to put men in contact with God. She is to bring men under the reign of God, and she is to do this through her life and ministry.

3. She puts men in touch with God by her ministry of healing. She should be sensitive to all the ills of the human race, and she should do all in her power to bring healing to all men on all the levels of human existence. Men should experience God's reign in her ministry of forgiveness. Her own life should be a constant conversion to God, experience of God's forgiving love, and she should impart that forgiveness to others. All her ministry must be animated by compassion. In it there should be no manifestation of any pharisaical arrogance but only divine compassion, arising from a genuine understanding of the human situation, a compassion that is the concrete expression of love. Men's experience of God's reign in her ministry should be a liberating experience. She should never try to enslave men, to make their life more burdensome, by unnecessarily multiplying rules and regulations. All rules and regulations should be subject to the law of love, and should help men grow up in the spirit of freedom, which is so characteristic of love.

4. In the fulfilment of her mission worldly ideas and standards, worldly powers, positions and pomps should have no place. She should be guided by the standards and values set by Jesus himself. She is to fulfil her mission by a life of humility, of self abnegation. She is to save men by serving them, not by lording it over them. Jesus became a source of life for others by his passion and death. The church can also save others, become a source of life for others, by accepting to suffer, to die.

5. But it goes without saying that the church is not something abstract. We are the church. The church's mission is our mission, and whatever has been said above applies to every one of us, to every follower of Christ.

Johannine Theology of the Church

Although the term "church" (*ekklesia*) is not used either in the Gospel or in two of the three Epistles of John¹, the Johannine writings, nevertheless, indicate what a Christian community is and should be. The idea that the believers constitute a community whose basis is their faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and whose principle of unity is their union with Christ is found in them. Here the emphasis is not on the exterior, visible aspects of the community; but its very basis, that is, the communion between the believers, is a theme that is quite prominent. Moreover, the Gospel and the Epistles show that the Johannine Christians had some form of organizational set up of a community.

In the Gospel we find certain figures that are ecclesial in signification. The figure of the shepherd, sheep and sheepfold (Jn 10:1-16, 26-30; 21:15-17) is one of them. In the Old Testament Israel was the flock of Yahweh (Gen 49:24; Pss 23; 78:52-53; Ez 34). Seen against this background the believers as the sheep of Christ are the New Israel. It is to be noted in this connection that the ideal envisaged in the Gospel is that of one flock under one shepherd, namely, Christ (Jn 10:16). Similarly, the figure of the vine and the branches (Jn 15:1-6), according to which the disciples (the believers) are the branches of the vine that is Christ, and they - Christ and the disciples - together constitute the one vine, is also an ecclesial figure. The unbroken net with hundred and fifty-three large fish is yet another symbol of the church (Jn 21:6-11). Moreover, in the statement in Jn 11:51-52, that the purpose of Jesus' death was "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad"², the idea of forming the church seems to be present.

1 The word *ekklesia* appears in 3 Jn 6: 9- 10. In the Book of Revelation it is used several times. In our discussion the idea of church as found in the Book of Revelation is not directly taken into account.

2 The word used for "gathering" is *synagein*, from which is derived the term *synagoge* (synagogue).

Communion and Community

If we assume that the account of Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of John reflects the historical situation of the Johannine Christians, we have indications to think that the Johannine Christians consisted of believers of different backgrounds. The Gospel says that the first disciples of Jesus were former disciples of John the Baptist, who were presumably Jews (Jn 1:35-40). Among those who believed in Jesus are mentioned also other Jews, Samaritans (Jn 4:39-42), and Hellenists (Jn 12:20-23). The various types of people who are presented as having believed in Jesus probably indicate the heterogeneous composition of the Johannine Christians as a group. In such a situation it was only natural if the Johannine community experienced internal tensions and dissensions. In fact, at the time when the Epistles were written there was tension in the community due to the erroneous views of some members, which resulted in a schism (cf. I Jn 2:18-19). Moreover, the believers saw themselves as being actively and viciously opposed by "the world", namely, by those who refused to accept Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Jn 15:18-25). Against this background the stress that the Gospel and the Epistles lay on the bond that unites the believers is quite understandable.

i. According to John those who believe in Jesus, the incarnate Word and Son of God, are in intimate union with God and His Son. This necessarily means that through this union the individual believers are united with one another. John uses various expressions to bring out the different aspects of the union that results from faith. The most basic of these is "eternal life", by which is meant the possession of divine life by the believers. According to the Johannine view the ultimate source of all divine realities is the Father. And everything that the Father has, he has entrusted to the Son (Jn 3:35). The communication of all that the Father has to the Son is not simply for his personal enrichment, but in order that through the Son those who believe in him may also have a share in these divine realities. The relation between the Father and the

Son is the basis and model of the relation between the Son and the believers. This perspective is an integral element of Johannine soteriology. It is from this point of view that John speaks about the divine life. The Father has life in its fullness and he has imparted the same fullness of life to the Son (Jn 5:26). From the Son it flows to those who accept him and are united with him in faith (Jn 3:16; 10:10; 14:6). Faith brings man into vital union with the Son. It is this idea that John expresses when he presents Jesus as the Word of Life, namely, as the Word which God has spoken in order to communicate life to those who accept him who has become available and accessible to man as the Word become flesh³. He is the life-giving Word of God among men and for men. Jesus, the Word incarnate, is himself available and accessible to man through his word, because his word is his vital extension. Consequently, it is by accepting and appropriating his word that one can accept Jesus, the Word of God. The words of the Son contain and mediate the divine life-principle, which is the Spirit (Jn 6:63-68).

The divine life in which the believer is given a share, as distinct from the earthly human life, is often described as "eternal life" (*zoē aionios*) in the Johannine writings. This qualification underscores the other-worldly and transtemporal character of this life. In contrast to the Synoptic view of eternal life as the reward to be given to the righteous, and, therefore, as a blessing belonging to the future, in John's perspective of realized eschatology the believers here and now possess the eternal life, though its full manifestation will be in the future in the form of resurrection from the dead (Jn 6:40-54; 11:25-26). Thus, according to John, the believers are those who have the same life as the Father and the Son. The possession of the divine life establishes them in intimate communion with the Father and the Son through the Spirit, and among themselves.

3 See especially Jn 1:4; 1 Jn 1:1; also Jn 6:33-35; 40:48, where Jesus is presented as "bread of life/living bread", meaning that he is the life-giving Word of God.

ii. In the First Epistle of John the Christian communion is described in terms of *koinōnia*. The word *koinōnia* is usually translated as "fellowship", "communion", and its basic meaning implies participation. As stated by the author of I John, the *koinōnia* is a relationship that results from the proclamation of the Christian message about the Word of life (I Jn 1:1-2); those who accept the proclamation enter into communion with those who proclaim, which is ultimately a communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (I Jn 1:3). The idea of participation latent in the concept of *koinōnia* indicates that this communion is due to the fact that the believers by virtue of their faith participate in the divine life and thus the *koinōnia* ensues from their possession of the divine life.

iii. Another form in which John describes the Christian communion is in terms of the father-children relationship between God and men. In the Gospel God is consistently referred to as the Father in relation to Jesus who is the unique Son sent by Him into the world (Jn 1:14). The mission of the Son had as its purpose to give power "to all who received him, who believed in his name, to become children of God" (Jn 1:12). The process by which the believers become children of God is designated as "begetting" (Jn 1:13). In the Gospel the manner of the divine begetting, or being begotten "from above" (Jn 3:3) which is the necessary condition for "entering the kingdom of God", is specified as being "begotten of water and Spirit" (Jn 3:5). The expression "water and Spirit" refers to the fact that the divine begetting takes place through the agency of the Word of God and through the action of the Spirit⁴, and here we have probably also a reference to the baptismal context of the divine begetting of the believers. The idea of begetting implies that the

4. Here, as also elsewhere in John, in accordance with the Biblical symbolism, "water" signifies both the Word of God (cf. Is 55:1-3; Sir 24:21; also Prov. 13:14; 18:4; Sir 24:23-29) and the Spirit (cf. Is 32:15; Joel 2:28-29; also Ez 36:25-26; Is 44:3). In the expression, "of water and Spirit", the explicit mention of the Spirit, which is already signified by "water", seems to be intended to emphasize the role of the Spirit in the divine begetting.

possession of divine life involves a real transformation and a new existence for the one to whom the life is communicated. According to John the divine begetting can take place only when the revelation of the Son is completed with the glorification of Jesus through his death and resurrection, after which the Son can communicate the Spirit to those who have accepted him (Jn 3:9-15; 7:39). The arrival of this moment is symbolically indicated with the description of the blood and water flowing from the pierced side of Jesus who had just handed over his Spirit (Jn 19:30; 34-35). And when the glorification of Jesus is completed with his resurrection, the risen Christ formally declares that his Father has become the Father of his disciples and therefore they have become his brothers (Jn 20:17). It is significant that, in contrast to the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus already during his public ministry instructs the disciples to call God "Father", in the Johannine Gospel it is only at this juncture (Jn 20:17) that Jesus for the first time refers to God as the Father of the disciples. The author of I John in this post-Easter perspective solemnly declares that the believers are the children of God and that they have been begotten by God (1 Jn 3:1-2; also 2:29; 3:9-10; 4:7; 5:1-18).

iv. Another dimension of the relationship resulting from the sharing of the same divine life is described in the Gospel and in I John by means of the expressions "to be in" and "to remain in". These two expressions are used interchangeably and have almost the same meaning except that "to remain in" includes the idea of permanence. "To be in" and "to remain in" are employed to signify a trilateral relationship: the reciprocal relationship between the Father and the Son (Jn 10:38; 14:10), between the Father and the believers (1 Jn 4:4; 3:24), and between the Son and the believers (Jn 14:20; 6:56), as the believers' relationship with both the Father and the Son (Jn 17:21). What is envisaged in these statements is an intimate relationship of union between the Father and the Son in which the believers participate by virtue of their faith in the Son. The claim of the Johannine Jesus,

"The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30), is explained as, "The Father (is) in me and I in the Father" (10:38). This perfect union between the Father and the Son as reciprocal, "being in", is the basis and model for the union between the believers (Jn 17:11, 21,22).

Moreover, the relationship of union expressed in terms of "being in" or "remaining in" is a dynamic one. For the "works" of the Son are the works done by the Father who remains in him and therefore these very works reveal that he is in the Father and the Father in him (Jn 14:10-11; also 10:37-38). In the same way, the believers in whom the Father and the Son remain (Jn 14:23) will do the works of the Son (Jn 14:12). It is this dynamic, intimate union between Jesus and his disciples through faith, that is illustrated by means of the figure of the vine and the branches (Jn 15:1-17). In this context, the union with Jesus, which is described as mutual remaining in, is the necessary condition for the fruitfulness of the disciples: "Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in me" (Jn 15:4). Jesus remains in the disciples and they should respond by remaining in him. This response is to be given through faith by letting the word of Jesus remain in them, as shown by the statement, "if you remain in me and my words remain in you" etc. (Jn 15:7). In this statement of Jesus, "my words" takes the place of "I", thereby indicating that Jesus remains in the disciples by virtue of his word, through which he becomes available to man, because his word is his dynamic vital self-expression and continuation, just as God has become accessible for man through him who is the Word of God. The fruitfulness of the disciples is due to the effective presence of Jesus' word in them (Jn 15:3), and it should become manifest in the form of the fulfilment of the commandments (Jn 15:10).

Church as the Community of Love

In the Johannine perspective, the dynamic communion between God, His Son and the believers is characterized

by love. John envisages the Christian community as a community of love having as its model and basis the union of love that exists between the Father and the Son.

The Father's love for the Son has found its concrete expression in the fact that He has communicated everything He has to the Son (Jn 3:35; 17:24). Consequently, the mission of the Son by the Father, and the Father's plan for the accomplishment of this mission, which is called the commandment that He has given to the Son (Jn 10:17:18), are the expressions of His love for the Son. Jesus, the Son, has responded to this love by fulfilling the Father's commandment (Jn 14:31). The Father's love for the Son is the model and source of his love for his disciples (Jn 15:9; 17:23). The love that flows from the Father to the Son becomes available to the disciples through the Son by means of and in the form of his presence in them (Jn 17:26). The disciples should respond to this love by loving Jesus, and it is in this way that they can experience the Father's love (Jn 14:21-23; 16:27). Their love for Jesus is, however, to be manifested through their fulfilment of his commandments (Jn 14:15-21; 23-24; 15:10-14), as Jesus' love for the Father was expressed by him fulfilling His commandments. The commandments of Jesus are epitomized in the commandment that the disciples should love one another as he himself loved them (Jn 13:34; 15:12). This command is the parting gift of Jesus to the disciples and the expression of his love for them. By fulfilling this commandment the disciples make one another experience the Father's love that flows to them through the Son. This love is the source and exemplar of their love for one another, and that is the meaning of the qualification, "as I have loved you", added to the commandment of Jesus, "love one another". The newness of this commandment (Jn 13:34) consists precisely and primarily in this. Consequently, the Johannine Jesus has specified love for one another as the sign by which his disciples can be recognized (Jn 13:35). When the author of I John speaks about "the love being perfected", namely, about the love reaching its goal (1 Jn 4:12), what he means is this process of the divine love

communicated to the believers through Jesus Christ reaching back to its source and goal, which is God, by means of Christian fraternal love. Thus, in the Johannine vision, the Christian community is one in which the dynamic union of love between the Father and the Son is realized and experienced in the form of love among its members. Walking in the light is the necessary requirement and expression of the *koinonia* with God, His Son and with one another (1 Jn 1:5-7; cf 1:3). In this passage when God is stated to be "light", this means that God is the one who has revealed Himself in and through His Son and thus made Himself available to man as his salvation⁵. This revelatory self-communication of God is as love (1 Jn 3:16; 4:9-10; cf. Jn 3:16); and as God is light, He is also love (1 Jn 4:8-16) - His very nature is love. Hence, the one who "walks in the light", namely, the one who leads his life in accordance with the self-revelation of God and thus participates in the salvation offered to him, is the one who manifests in his conduct the divine love operative in him (1 Jn 2:9-11).

The Word and the Spirit - the dynamic principles of the Christian Community

According to John the Christian community has as its dynamic principles the divine word and Spirit which the believers possess. Jesus who is the Word of God is for men the source of the life-giving word and Spirit. This is the meaning of those passages in the Gospel where he is presented as the source of "living water" (Jn 4:10-14; 7:37-39). His words are the medium through which he communicates the Spirit and life (Jn 6:63; also 5:24; 6:68) to all those who believe in him. The believers become the children of God through the agency of the word (1 Jn 3:9) and by the transforming power of the Spirit (Jn 3:2-8). The word remains in them as a dynamic reality (1 Jn 2:14) liberating them from the enslaving power of sin, through the

5 The figure of light signifies both revelation (cf. Wis 7:25-26; 18:4; Prov 6:23; Sir 50:29; Is 2:5) and salvation (cf. ps 27:1; Is 9:1; 42:16; 49:6; 58:10; 59:9; 62:1, etc.)

knowledge of the divine truth that it bestows (Jn 8:31-32); the power of the word that abides in them is such that if they co-operate with it fully, they will be rendered completely free from sin (1 Jn 3:9). The word that remains in them, enables them to lead an abundantly fruitful Christian life in union with Christ (Jn 15:3,7-8).

In accordance with the promises of Jesus to the disciples, the Spirit that the believers have received, besides being actively involved in their divine begetting, remains in them (Jn 14:15-17) and teaches them all things reminding them of all that Jesus himself taught, and leading them to a better and deeper understanding of his revelation (Jn 14:26; 16:13) and to a more intimate union with him. The Spirit bears witness to Jesus enabling the disciples to be his witnesses (Jn 15:26-27; also 1 Jn 5:6-8). It is the same role of the Spirit that the author of I John refers to when he writes: "As for you, the anointing (*chrisma*) which you received from him remains in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; as his anointing teaches you about all things...you remain in him" (1 Jn 2:27). In the Johannine vision of the Christian community, its members are being taught by the Spirit, and this teaching is the norm for their faith in Christ and communion with him. For the believer the teaching of the Spirit dispenses with the need of human teachers in order to remain in Christ. This is certainly not to be understood in an absolute sense. The Johannine community in fact had human teachers, and the author of I John was one of them. However, in the Johannine perspective the human teachers are and should be the true instruments of the Spirit. It should be the Spirit who teaches through them. This is possible only when they are completely responsive to the action of the Spirit. Another role of the Spirit is that of enabling the believers to render a new and genuine worship to God, in which they stand in filial relationship with God who is their father (Jn 4:23-24). This is just another aspect of the agency of the Spirit in the divine begetting and of his function as the teacher of the believers.

Authority in the Community as the Service of Love

The Johannine Jesus through the foot-washing has given to his disciples his own example as the model for their conduct and relationship in the community: "If I..., your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:14-15). Jesus, the master, comes down to the level of the servant rendering humble service to the disciples who in reality could be considered his servants (cf. Jn 13:13; 15:15). The disciples, following the example of Jesus, should render the same kind of service to one another. In this context the foot-washing appears to symbolize and represent the ultimate "service" that Jesus has rendered by laying down his life, which he explains as the supreme expression of love by which the "servants" are transformed into the "loved ones" (cf. Jn 13:16-17 with 15:13-15). The community of the disciples is envisaged to be one in which this transformation continues to take place through the "service" rendered by every member. The "superiority" of the disciples is proportionate to the extent to which they realize this ideal of service in their lives⁶.

In Jn 20:23 the risen Jesus gives to the disciples the power to forgive sins and to retain them. This power is the consequence of their mission by Jesus which is the continuation of his own mission by the Father, and the result of the communication of the Spirit to them (Jn 20:21-22) by which they participate in his power. Jesus is, however, the one who has come as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29), namely, he is the one who, as the new Paschal Lamb and the Servant of the Lord, liberates the world from sin through his death. This liberation from the enslaving power of sin can take place only if one believes in him accepting his word (Jn 8:24-31; 34-36). The Son has been sent by the Father

6 Jn 13:17; cf. Mt 20:26-28; Mk 10:43-45; also Lk 22:26.

to save the world; but his mission, which is the manifestation of the Father's love for the world, turns out to be a condemnatory event for those who do not believe in him (Jn 3:16-21). Hence to forgive sins and to retain them is a power given to the disciples by virtue of the commission they have received to continue the mission of the Son making available to men the saving love of the Father revealed and communicated through His Son, Jesus Christ, the effect of which - forgiveness of sins or retention of sins - is determined by the attitude of the one who encounters the Son through them: by accepting the Son in faith the saving power becomes effective as forgiveness of sins, whereas by rejecting him one excludes oneself from it, and the sins remain. Thus, the power to forgive sins and to retain them is not an authority that is at the arbitrary disposal of the disciples, but it is another aspect of the service of love which they are expected to render.

In Jn 21:15-17 Simon Peter is the recipient of a special commissioning by the risen Christ to feed his flock. This scene reflects the awareness of the Johannine community about the special role that Peter had in the early church. It is significant that, although the beloved disciple was the principal source of the tradition of the Johannine community (cf. Jn 19:35; 21:24) and, therefore, the witness whose testimony became the basis of its faith, Peter is acknowledged as the shepherd entrusted with the care of Jesus' flock. The role of the shepherd given to Peter is a share in Jesus' own role as the shepherd (Jn 10:10-18), and a continuation of it. Therefore its significance is to be seen in the context of what the Johannine Jesus has said about himself as the model shepherd. Jesus is the model shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (Jn 10:11-13) in order to give them life abundantly (Jn 10:10-28) and who knows his sheep intimately (Jn 10:14-16). The relationship between Jesus and his sheep is modelled after and based on his relationship with the Father (Jn 10:15). By laying down his life he is to gather all into one flock under his salvific care uniting them through his death (Jn 10:16). Jesus, the Shepherd, is the

model for Peter who is given the role of shepherd. He should feed and tend the flock of Christ in the same way as Christ did, following him even in his death, and thus rendering the supreme service of love for the flock. This is the ideal for those who have received the role of the shepherd in the Christian community.

Conclusion

In the Johannine perspective the church as the community of the believers who have been begotten by God and made His children, is the family of God, where the same life binds all its members together. By presenting the church as having as its model and source of unity the most intimate relationship between the Father and the Son, John has given to the members of the Christian community a challenging ideal. It is an ideal to be realized, an ideal to be ever aimed at and strived for. The members of the Christian community through their life, inspired by faith and characterized by love, have to make it more and more a reality. The divine bond uniting them should become transparent to all as a powerful witness to the fact that God loves the world and has given His only Son to it, so that the whole humankind may have His own life, and be one as He and the Son are one. The church is faithful to God and to His call only by witnessing to the saving presence of Christ who abides in her members and in whom they abide. This salvific presence should be distinctly recognizable in all aspects of her life. Especially, the life of the church should be marked by divine love operative in her members, expressing itself as service for fostering growth in the divine life. The salvation made available to her and through her, should touch all spheres of human existence, both material and spiritual. This mission she can accomplish only if she is totally responsive to the power of the Spirit available to her through the Word of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Pauline Theology of the Church

One of the major criticisms about the book of H. Küng, *On Being a Christian*¹ is that he does not sufficiently make the basis of his thesis on the reality of the Church; rather he starts with Christ, the God-man who proposed a programme of life, a new life, to live. One who sincerely studies the New Testament and analyses the progress of thought in its various writings will find it difficult not to agree with H. Küng, not because of the absence of the word 'Church' (*ekklesia*) in the New Testament, but because of the role the Church plays in the realization of the Christian programme. This statement is made with the full awareness that Pauline Letters, the first writings of the New Testament, use the word *ekklesia* more often than any other New Testament writer². Paul is the first New Testament writer to employ the word in plural, which signifies the equality of separate local Churches. He also has a highly developed theology of the Church in Ephesians and Colossians as the entire worldwide assembly of the followers of Jesus.

At the same time, for Paul, Christian life is basically rooted in Christ and it is something that is to be unfolded with the help of the Spirit. As part of this unfolding within the framework of the community, the reality of the Church is brought in. The data in the Pauline letters reveal the fact that for Paul the Church was nothing but the community of those who were believing in Christ and gathering together for worship.

The Churches and the Church of God

Paul uses *ekklesia* in the Early Letters (1-2 Thes) in two senses: either to designate a local Church (1 Thes 1:1;

1. H. Kung, *On Being a Christian*, Collins, 1977.

2. The word 'ekklesia' occurs 65 times in the writings of Paul. In most of these instances the word signifies a local church.

2 Thes 1:1) or in the sense expressed by the phrase "Church of God" (1 Thes 2:4; 2 Thes 1:4). It either denotes the local congregation of believers in Thessalonica - a unity developed from their community in belief and worship - or is a title of predilection for Judean communities (cf. 1 Thes 2:14). *Ekklesia* is used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *qahal*, the term given to the assembly of the Israelites, particularly in their desert wanderings. They are called the *ekklesia* of the Lord (Dt 23:2) or the "*ekklesia* of the People of God" (Judg 20:2; Cf Acts 7:38). But it also refers to the Israelites in liturgical gatherings (1 Kgs 8:55; 1 Chr 29:10). However, Paul's expression, *ekklesia tou theou*, is unique. But given the Old Testament background, it was the apt designation for the primitive local Churches in Judea, the first units formed in Christian history and peculiarly linked through their Jewish roots to the Israelite *qahal* of old.

In the Major Letters³ we find the same two senses again. Here *ekklesia* refers to the local churches of Galatia, Judea, Macedonia, and Cenchreae (Gal 1:2-22; 2 Cor 8:1; Rom 16:1). But the title "church of God", though referred to Judean Churches (1 Cor 11:16), is now also applied to the Church of Corinth. According to L. Cerfaux, this title does not designate the universal church as manifested at Corinth, but is a Pauline way of flattering a Church with which he has had rather stormy relations⁴. He accords to Corinth the title otherwise reserved for the mother churches of Palestine (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; possibly also 1 Cor 10:32). But it may be noted that in this very extension of meaning there is a broadening of Paul's understanding of the idea of *ekklesia*. It begins to transcend the local barriers. This is the seed of Paul's teaching on the universality of the Church in his later letters. And it is precisely in 1 Corinthians that this seed of universality is first found, a concept which develops further in the Captivity Letters.

3. The Major or Great Letters of Paul are 1 and 2 Cor, Gal and Rom.

4. L. Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St Paul*, New York, 1960, p. 113.

We can thus detect a certain growth in Paul's awareness of what "the Church" really means for humanity. In a sense, it is but the development of his understanding of the Christ event and Christian life. Man is baptized "in one Spirit to form one body" (1 Cor 12:13). The unity of the Christian community in the Church is Paul's great contribution to Christian theology, a unity that he derives from the single purpose of the divine plan of salvation. There is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above us all, pervades us all, and is within us all" (Eph 4:5-6)⁵. Eventually Paul came to look on the "Church of God" as a transcendent unit embracing both Jews and Greeks but somehow different from them (1 Cor 10:32).

Images of the Church in Pauline Theology

The most common title Paul gives to the members of the Church is *saints*, namely, those who love God, those who are called (Rom 8:27-28), those who are hallowed in Christ Jesus, those who are called to be holy (1 Cor 1:2), the chosen holy ones of God (Col 3:12). Through faith and baptism the believers have put an end to their life in the flesh and have inaugurated a new life, a life in the Spirit, which is the basis and guarantee of their holiness. Hence Paul writes: "You are the People of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity. The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one body" (Col 3:12-15).

5 We note here that Paul does not use "one Church", a major preoccupation of Theologians in the post-Reformation period. The Church is not something that can be understood as monolithic.

The fact that the Church is the fellowship of the 'Saints' does not mean that it has no visible aspects. In fact, Paul uses a number of other images through which he brings out the various *visible aspects* of the Church. The Church is the temple of God for the fact that the Spirit of God lives in her members, and consequently it is holy (1 Cor 3:16-19; 2 Cor 6:16). The Church is also compared to a city (Eph 2:19) and to a building built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone upon which the entire building reposes. The members of the Church are incorporated into it (Eph 2:20ff). This has reference to Mt 16:18. The most dynamic concept of the Church that Paul uses is undoubtedly that of the Body of Christ, which has also reference to the images of temple and building. The figure of the Church as the body is the basis of Paul's appeal for Christian unity and cooperation (1 Cor 12:12ff; Rom 12:4ff). The unity of the one body is symbolized by the one bread of the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:17). In the Church God has established certain offices in a set order: apostles, prophets, teachers, thaumaturges, and to assist the Church he confers charismata of healing, helpfulness, government, and of tongues. Each Christian should fulfil the function assigned to him without attempting to enter into the office of others (1 Cor 12:28ff). Paul often speaks of the Christian's duty to *build up* the Church. He exhorts the Thessalonians to encourage (*parakaílo*) one another and build up one another (*oikodoméo*) (1 Thes 5:11). In 1 Cor 3:10-17 Paul brings in the image of sincere and committed workers and contrasts them with half-dedicated people. The latter's work will not endure. In the context of instructing the Christians of Corinth about the problem of eating meat offered to idols, Paul explains how "knowledge puffs up" and "charity builds up". (1 Cor 8:1-19). The liberty of one Christian should not become a stumbling block to another Christian (1 Cor 8:9), and no one should ever cause a brother to be destroyed, for whom Christ went to the extreme of laying down his life (1 Cor 8:11).

Paul's Relation to the Churches

The significance of the Church in the theology of Paul becomes clear also through an analysis of the manner in which Paul related himself to the Churches which he himself had founded and also to those Churches which had a strategic importance in the preaching of the Gospel in the first century. The Church of Corinth was one which Paul founded during his second missionary journey (AD 51) (Acts 18:1-18). He stayed 18 months in Corinth precisely because he knew that this community was in need of personal attention in its growth. Even after he left he had to be in constant contact with that Church through the many letters he wrote⁶. Paul had to correct many disorders and areas of indiscipline in that Church, especially in matters of immorality and party spirit (1 Cor 1:11-4:21; 5:1-13; 6:12-20). When Paul's authority was questioned by an offender and many followed his schismatic group, Paul had to bring the Corinthians to their senses, which he did not through arrogant authority but through the magnetic power of his personal approach. He presented himself as a man of integrity and sincerity. "We are not trying to dictate to you what you must believe; we know that you stand firm in the faith. Instead, we are working with you for your own happiness" (2 Cor 1:24).

Paul writing to his dear friends at Philippi gives us a beautiful picture of a community that is guided by the charismatic leadership of an apostle, living away from the Church but having the dynamic capacity to make it grow and become an ideal community. The portrait of a Christian community as given by Paul illustrates how he wanted that community to excel in virtues, such as perseverance, harmony, altruistic humility, nobility of character and good example (Phil 1:27-2:18; 4:4-9). Paul writes: "If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all,

6 It is the opinion of scholars that Paul wrote four Letters to the Corinthians, of which we possess the second and the fourth (cf. 1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2; 3-4).

or the Spirit that we have in common can persuade you if there is any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind. That is the one thing which would make me completely happy. There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody has to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first, but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead" (Phil 2:1-4).

Paul's relation to the Churches in Galatia is different in time, but it is the very same concern which motivates. Paul is dealing with a crisis in those Churches. He found the Churches of Galatia undergoing an identity crisis caused by the Judaizers. Paul was ready to face this challenge and safeguard the truth of the Gospel. Though efforts were made to force Paul to a compromise (Gal 2:4), he did not give in even for a minute in order to keep the truth of the Gospel safe for all. Paul respected the authority of the Jerusalem Church; but he did not make compromise on sound principles which he had already learned and for which he fought (Gal 2:11-14).

The Letter to the Romans is perhaps the clearest example of Paul's concern about a local Church because of its strategic importance for the well-being of the other Churches. It is true that the word 'Church' does not occur in this letter, except in chapter 16, which is probably not an integral part of the Letter. However, the motivation behind Paul writing this letter was not merely to present a systematic presentation of his theological insights about man's acceptance before God. The Church of Rome was in a state of crisis. Paul undertook the task of instructing and guiding that Church, though he himself was not the founder of that Church and consequently did not want to "build on another man's foundation" (Rom 15:20). However, as the apostle of the Gentiles and also as a responsible apostle of the early Church he considered it a task and privilege to instruct, guide and inspire that Church with his theological insights and personal warmth. He

explained to them the personal and communitarian dimensions of Christian life, which together constitute the reality of an authentic Church (Rom 12:1-2). A similar situation presented itself in the Church of Colossae. Though Paul was not the founder of that Church (Col 2:1), he wrote a letter to them confronting the many errors prevalent there and explaining clearly Christ's unique place, his all-powerful and cosmic role in the universe and in history (Col 1:15-20).

The above examples of Paul's relation to other Churches show how he was trying to coordinate the Christian communities in those Churches. Paul did not start founding Churches; what he aimed at was making disciples for Christ, as he himself had become. Once several communities were formed, he concentrated on instructing and coordinating them, which he did partly by himself and partly by appointing *elders* and in some cases *deacons* as well (cf. Phil 1:1; Acts 20:28-31). But it never occurred to him to think of the Church as a hierarchically organized structure. However, his contact with the many Churches as well as his experience in dealing with the various pastoral problems and issues in those Churches enabled Paul to reflect on the reality of the Church as something transcending the concreteness of local communities. He began to realize that the Church is the very concreteness of Christ's presence in the Christian community. His effort to get into touch with the Church of Rome, his consequent arrest and imprisonment in Jerusalem and his later voyage to Rome where he spent two years of house arrest (Acts 28:30-31) all helped Paul to reflect on the mystery of Christ as related to the mystery of the Church. The two letters Paul wrote from the Roman imprisonment very well bring out his profound insights on the reality of the Church during the last part of his apostolic career.

The Universal Church in Colossians and Ephesians

For Paul the Church is not an after-thought of God's plan of salvation, God made the entire universe in Christ,

through Christ and for Christ. In so far as Christ is superior to all created things, he has a pre-eminence of his own. To this is added the fact that he is the head of his body, the Church. He is the source of its life. This he became not by his eternal origin from the Father, but by the fact that he is the first-born from the dead. The uncreated and the created have their convergence in Christ and thereby the fullness (*pleroma*) of God in Christ is the fulness of the uncreated and created. Consequently Christ is the one in whose life-giving blood God effected the final reconciliation of all things. His body, which is the Church, is the reality through which this reconciliation has to be completed. The physical body of Christ was the sign and instrument of this reconciliation and the Church as the body of Christ has to continue the same in the process and progress of history (Col 1:15-23). In one sense not only humanity but also the entire cosmic order is affected by the reality of the Church. Since the entire cosmos came into being through Christ, in Christ and for Christ and since Christ is the head of his body, the Church, it also has a decisive role to play in the cosmic process in so far as it has to bring the entire cosmos to Christ as the head in the fullness of time. This is what Paul writes in Eph 1:10: "This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head" (*anakephaliosasthai ta panta en tō Christō*). The Church is not an onlooker and a passive agent in this process; rather it has to play an active role in the realization of God's plan for history and for the cosmos. The risen Christ "rules above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords: he has a title, superior to all titles of authority in this world and in the next. God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the Church as Supreme Lord over all things. The Church is Christ's body, the fullness (*pleroma*) of him who himself fills all things everywhere" (Eph 1:20-22).

The final stage of Pauline reflection on the reality of the Church is the most sublime one. Paul did not try

to explain all the aspects of the Church because it is a "mystery" in the same way as Christ is a mystery. So also the relationship between the Church and Christ is a mystery, namely, something transcending the categories of human reflection and speculation. Hence Paul writes: "This mystery has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church" (Eph 5:32). Any attempt to remove this aspect of mystery from the Church will either make the Church a merely human institution or conceive of it as a divine reality. The fact is that the Church has to maintain its divine and human aspects at the same time and only so can the Church grow in history.

It is the context in which Paul exhorts the Ephesians to build up the body of Christ through their spiritual and human qualities: "Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all" (Eph 4:2-6). But this unity is not a monolithic one, it is based on diversity, the diversity of charisms: some are apostles, some are prophets, some are evangelists, others are pastors and teachers, so that they together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ. All are to come to unity in faith and in their knowledge of the Son of God, until all become the perfect man, fully mature with the fulness (*pleroma*) of Christ himself (cf Eph 4:7-13). The question here is not a hierarchical Church, but a Church understood as the communion of the People of God. This Church is articulated in the many local Churches; at the same time it transcends all Churches and remains a reality which we cannot fully understand.

Conclusion

Our study of the Pauline theology of the Church shows very clearly that for Paul the Church was not so much a

reality outside of Christian life as it was the very reality in which the believers lived and experienced Christ. The various images of the Church reveal how Paul was fascinated by this reality as something that needed a many-faceted illustration. However, before Paul could arrive at that stage of reflection, he had to establish the fact that the Church of God was not only the Church of Jerusalem but also any Church that existed in the different parts of the world. Though he had a great respect and reverence for the church of Jerusalem, he never wanted to be a slave of that Church. He came down to Jerusalem to present to the Jerusalem authorities the truth of the Gospel he preached. On the basis of equality he presented to the "pillars" of the Jerusalem Church the Gospel he had been preaching. This event enabled Paul to realize that the Church of Jerusalem was in need of a transformation, for the simple reason that its leaders were in need of broadening their vision to see the total reality of the ministry of the Word of God. This is not to say that Paul was a Reformer. His commitment to Christ and to his Gospel was such that it never gave in to any compromise on the truth of the Gospel.

Pauline theology of the Church is a typical case of a theology in progress. Paul wrote his 13 letters within a short span of 15 years. In them we notice a real progress of thought, a phenomenon which shows how ready Paul was to take stock of the new opportunities and challenges he had to face. Trained as he was under Gamaliel, Paul must have developed a broad outlook on realities and this turn helped him to learn from experience and adapt his theological thinking to those new situations. The last stage of this reflection was reached in the Captivity Letters, where we come across the mystic theologian Paul, who went deep into the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Church. Thanks to Paul's profound insights into this mystery, we have today a theology of the Church that far surpasses all what the history of the Church has produced during the past 20 centuries.

However, it will be a mistake on our part to remain satisfied with what Paul has written. He has written at a time when the Church was struggling to establish itself as a reality in the Roman empire. Paul wanted to show the uniqueness of the Christ event and the uniqueness of the church. He had to show how the Church is different from Judaism and from other Gentile religions of his time. In fact, he had his own limitations in understanding and appreciating other non-biblical religions. He had to establish the superiority of the Church over all existing religious establishments.

Our times are different, we are living at a time when we are called upon to appreciate other religions and their institutions to see the positive values in them, to be tolerant and appreciative of these religions and their religious practices. It is now a question of religious authenticity coupled with religious tolerance. A theology of the Church today that does not take into account the reality of other religions is not a valid ecclesiology. Moreover, in the context of many Churches, both Catholic and other Christian Churches, existing and operating side by side, it is necessary to see the wider dimension of a theology of the Church in our times. However, Pauline theology of the Church serves as a normative theology for our theological reflections on the Church. In the same way as Paul arrived at the concept of a cosmic Church as the integral part of a cosmic Christ, we in our times have to develop a theology of the Church that transcends all historical manifestations of the Church.

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Book Review

God Experience, ed. by Fr. Joseph Puthenkulam, A Fransalian Vidyanyiketan Publication, Khamgaon, 1984, pp. 240.

This book is a collection of twenty nine articles written by different scholars who are enthusiastic on Indian spirituality, God-experience and Ashram life. The articles deal with various aspects of spirituality both Indian and Christian. Even though the book is a collection, it maintains a unifying continuity. The articles in general have a scholarly nature. The book is the first in the *Spiritual Series* which are to be published in future by the Fransalian Vidyanyiketan.

Many dedicated christians in India are looking forward to a deep experience of God which they like to experience in an Ashram context. Listening to the signs of the times, Fr. Puthenkulam with a prophetic vision, has taken the trouble to have a project, called Fransalian Vidyanyiketan, aiming to promote an Indian christian spirituality, deeply rooted in indigenous culture, prayer and contemplation. As a joint venture to share the common search for God both the book and the project are praiseworthy. I am sure that this book is a symbol of the deep aspirations of many men, irrespective of religions for their thirst for God-realization.

In the book there is a note on Ashram life by Fr. Joseph Mendes (pp. 40-41). considering the very nature of the book, a detailed article on Ashram experience and spirituality must have been very much in place. The article, "Glory of the Mountain", by Sr. Nihita Maria, describing her Himalayan pilgrimages is very interesting. The last three articles by Fr. Puthenkulam on Indian spiritual disciplines are very practical and enlightening. Fr. Mathew R. Lederle in his beautiful introduction explains the relevance of spiritual sadhanas and the renewed interest in christianity in the experiential content of Hinduism. I wish that a copy of this book be found in every library and formation house in India.

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